

ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE FURNEAUX ISLANDS (1798 - 1986):  
a study of Aboriginal racial policy, curriculum and teacher/  
community relations, with specific reference to Cape Barren Island

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## ABSTRACT

The Aboriginal people of Cape Barren Island and other Furneaux Islands have been selected for this historical analysis of Aboriginal education and racial policy, in order to ascertain the extent to which Tasmania has followed or diverged from the political and educational trends of other Australian States or Colonies, with respect to Aboriginal policy. It is found that Tasmania has influenced the development of Australian policies of Aboriginal repatriation, protection and segregation, and closely followed the national policies of assimilation and, to a lesser extent, integration. Yet the development of Tasmanian policy towards Aborigines and Aboriginal descendants, while clearly affected by national trends, has also been obfuscated by a prevailing belief, ideological in nature, that Tasmanian Aborigines have been extinct since 1876. The legacy of one century of supposed "extinction" is inherent in present State policy which, while at last recognising the right of individuals of Aboriginal descent to identify as Aboriginal, does not accord such persons the status and rights of indigenous Tasmanians called for by the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and its supporters, and has no expressed commitment to the current Federal policy of Aboriginal self-determination.

At the community level, the research finds that, for the most part, curriculum and pedagogy at the Cape Barren Island school have not differed substantially to that in other Tasmanian schools, although on occasions, teachers, the Tasmanian Government and the Education Department have devised specific changes in arrangements at the Island school, to implement a particular strategy in race-relations policy, or to accord with a particular educational model. With regard to teacher/community relations however, Cape Barren Island school teachers have traditionally been an authority figure, not only to the schoolchildren but to the adults of the community, for the male teachers have, historically been thrust into roles of missionary, Special Constable, Crown Lands Bailiff, magistrate, postmaster, medical officer, coroner and other duties. In addition to the responsibility and status invested in these offices, the pattern of dominant white/inferior black race-relations on Cape Barren Island has been reinforced by a situation where teachers have often been the sole residents on the Island in receipt of a comfortable year-round salary, whilst community members have suffered conditions of poverty and hardship throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Yet the research also shows that the Furneaux Island Aborigines, or "half-castes" as they were referred to until recently, have been reluctant to accept any notions of their own social or cultural inferiority, and have, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, engaged in numerous conflicts with the authorities over their rights, both free born as Tasmanian citizens and as descendants of the original Tasmanians.

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### ABBREVIATIONS

- ABM : Australian Board of Missions
- ACG : Aboriginal Consultative Group
- AOT : Archives Office of Tasmania:
- AUD : Audit Records
- CSD : Chief Secretary's Department
- CSO : Colonial Secretary's Office
- ED : Education Department
- GO : Governor's Office
- LSD : Lands Surveys Department
- LSO : Lands Surveys Office
- MM : Miscellaneous Microfilm
- NS : Non-State
- SWD : Social Welfare Department
- BFSS : British and Foreign Schools Society
- CDI EPF: Cape Barren Island Educational Planning Files,  
Tasmanian Education Department
- HRA : Historical Records of Australia
- NAEC : National Aboriginal Education Committee
- TAECC : Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee and,  
later, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Community Committee
- TAEAC : Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Advisory Council

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

#### 1.1 Outline of Research

The study presents an outline of educational practices and Aboriginal race-relations policies on Cape Barren and other Furneaux Islands. Part One of the research is a comparative study of the various Tasmanian Government Aboriginal policies with prevailing trends in Aboriginal policy throughout Australia. On a national level, Chapter Two surveys the policies of protection, segregation, assimilation, integration, self-determination and self management, the educational consequences of these policies for Aborigines, while the degree of concurrence of Tasmanian Aboriginal policies, particularly those extended towards Cape Barren Island, is assessed in the historiography presented in Chapter Three. Part Two interprets, within an historical framework, the types of educational experiences proffered to Aborigines and Aboriginal descendents on Cape Barren, Flinders and other Furneaux Islands. The research focuses on the nature of teacher/community relationships, and interprets how these relationships could be contingent upon official race-relations or educational policies. Additionally an assessment is made of the nature of curriculum, teaching methods, and the outcomes of schooling for Tasmanian Aborigines in Bass Strait, wherever documentation permits such analysis. Chapter Four examines the schooling received by Tasmanian Aborigines from 1828, with the opening of the Orphan School in Hobart, until 1870; Chapter Five presents a series of case studies of State school teachers between 1871



and 1927. Chapter Six looks at teacher/community relations and school matters on Cape Barren Island between 1928 and the official closure of the Cape Barren Reserve in 1950; Chapter Seven traces the history of Cape Barren Island education under assimilation and integration policies between 1951 and 1985, and examines the evolution of Tasmanian Government policy on Aboriginal education since 1979. Finally, Chapter Eight discusses the findings of the research.

## 1.2 The Cape Barren Island Community

The contemporary Tasmanian Aboriginal community, once centred on the Bass Strait Islands, is now well dispersed throughout the State.

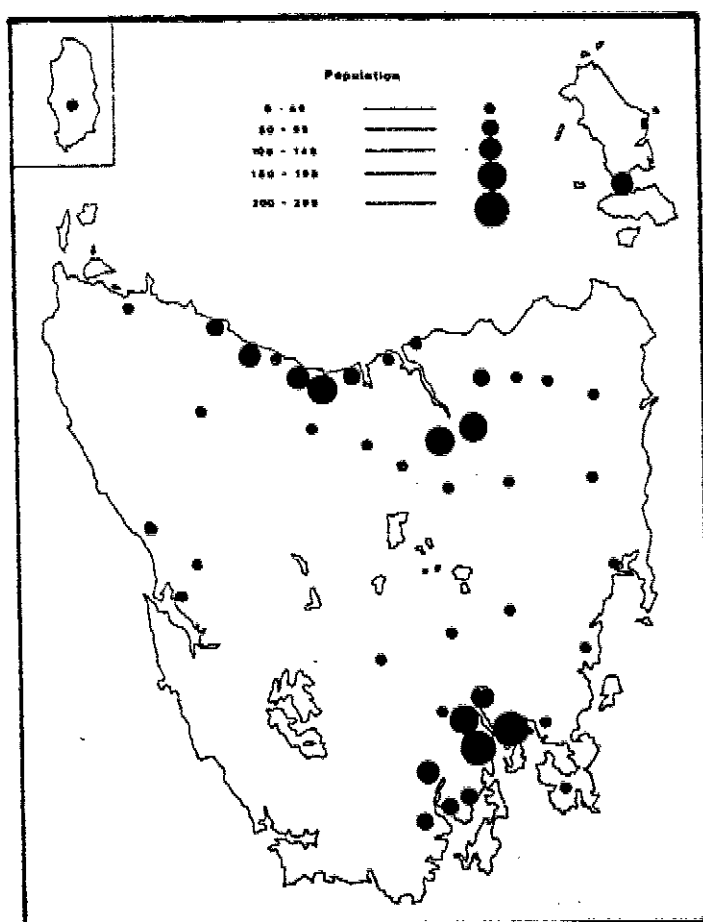


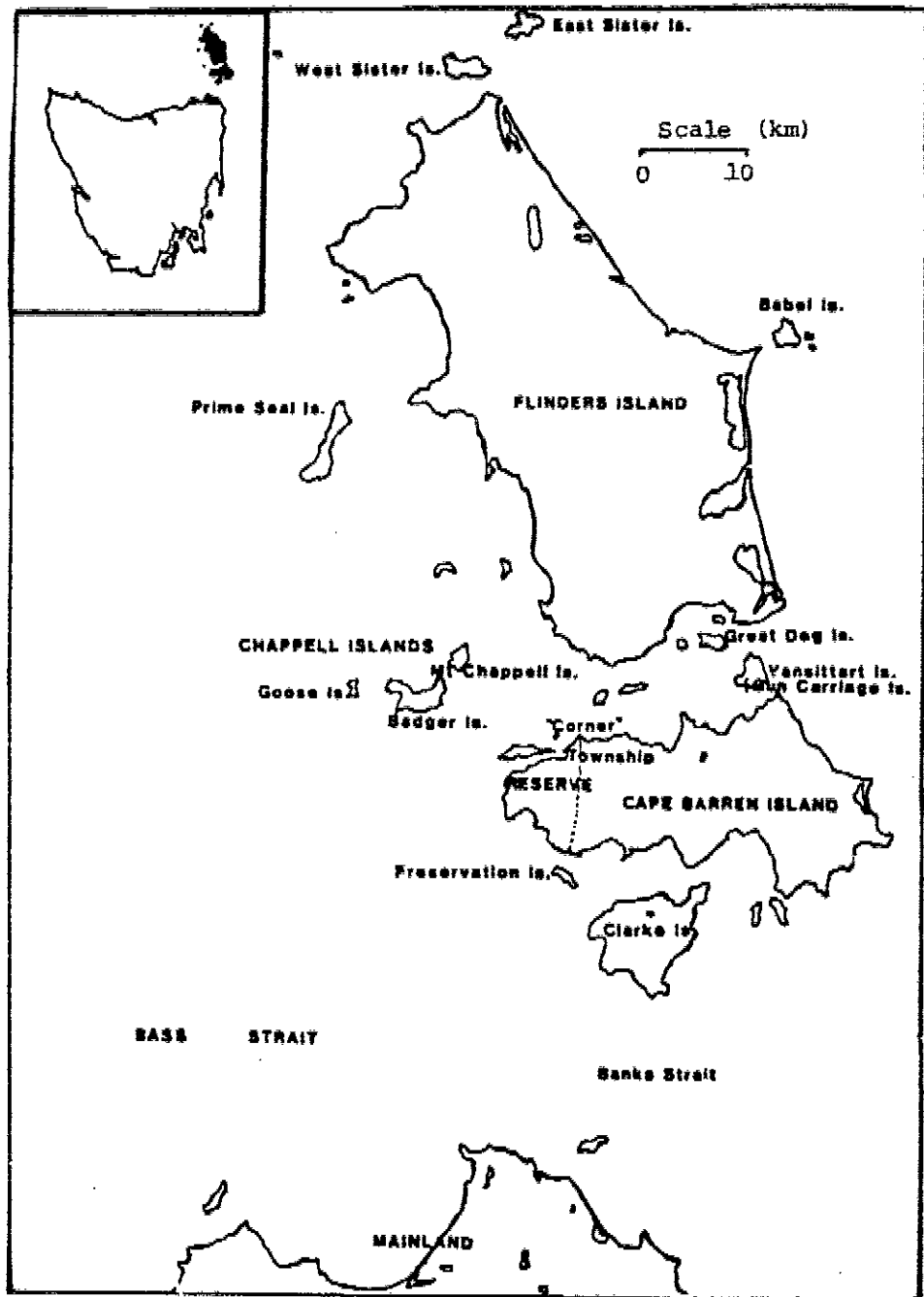
FIGURE 1.1

Aboriginal population centres, 1981 (by Local Government area).  
(Source: Tasmanian Year Book 1982, page 516)

Figure 1.1 demonstrates that whilst the Furneaux Islands still house a small proportion of the State's Aboriginal population, the largest population centres are now outside Bass Strait, in the Hobart, Huon, Launceston, and Burnie/Devonport regions. However, of all these contemporary Aboriginal centres, the Cape Barren Island community is the only Tasmanian community to have had racially-based legislation directed towards it. For this reason, Cape Barren, and the neighbouring Furneaux Islands have been selected for the research.

The people of Cape Barren Island are largely descended from British sealers who settled the Furneaux Islands (see Fig. 1.2) after the passing of the seal rush early in the nineteenth century.

Aboriginal women, mostly of Tasmanian origin, were abducted to the islands by the sealers. The offspring of about a dozen sealers and a dozen Aboriginal women inter-married over several generations and formed a closely-knit community on the Bass Strait Islands. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the community congregated on Cape Barren Island after a 6,000 acre reserve was created for them by the Tasmanian Government. This Reserve, with its associated segregationist laws, was phased out at the end of 1950. A significant proportion of the contemporary Tasmanian Aborigines now living on the Tasmanian mainland or on Flinders Island are emigrants, or descendants of emigrants, from Cape Barren Island.<sup>1</sup>



**FIGURE 1.2**

Map of Furneaux Islands.

Source: Tasmanian Year Book, 1982, p.511.

The Cape Barren Island school is suited to research of this kind because it is the only Tasmanian school to have had a predominant enrolment of Aboriginal pupils since its establishment in 1871. Another reason for selecting Cape Barren Island is the availability of many documents pertaining to racial policies and educational and practices on the Island in Tasmanian Parliamentary Papers, the Archives Office of Tasmania and elsewhere. On the negative side, however, Cape Barren Island is considered inappropriate to extensive research of a participative nature, because many members of the Island community mistrust outsiders, particularly writers, researchers and journalists, and have an expressed dislike of being viewed as objects of public interest or inquiry. They feel that many books, articles and television programs have been harmful to their image in the past.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3 Aboriginality in Tasmania

Opinion has differed amongst writers, academics and the wider Australian public as to whether Tasmania should constitute a special case in the history of Australian race-relations. Some, like the documentary film-makers Haydon and Jones (1978) would have it that the Tasmanian situation is unique because:

The extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines is the swiftest and most complete case of the genocide of a whole race in recorded history.<sup>3</sup>

The theme that the death of Truganini in 1876 marked the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines<sup>4</sup> has recurred consistently in the literature concerning the original Tasmanians, especially in works published prior to the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> The extinction theory is now refuted by at least two

thousand descendants of tribal Tasmanians who identify as Aboriginal. Only in the past decade has the extinction notion been challenged by printed material.<sup>6</sup> The Tasmanian Aborigines are supported in their quest for recognition of their identity by the Commonwealth definition of an Aboriginal, which has operated since the early 1970s. Aborigines are now officially defined as persons of Aboriginal descent, who identify as Aboriginal and are accepted as such by the community with which they are associated.<sup>7</sup>

One problem contingent upon an historical analysis of Aboriginality in Tasmania is the pejorative connotations of the terms "half-caste", "quarter-caste", "mixed-blood" or "part-blood", which have been customarily associated with non-traditional Aboriginal people. These labels are considered offensive by most Aborigines today and by the present researcher. However, it should be recognised that such epithets have been in common usage in Australia for almost two centuries, and until recently, Tasmanian Aborigines have been given little linguistic option other than to identify with these terms. For this reason, wherever the historical analysis demands the use of such terms, they will be placed in quotation marks. Although the cultural pluralism of non-Aboriginal (as well as Aboriginal) Australia is hereby acknowledged, it is considered that the policies and practices that have been directed towards Aborigines derive from English cultural origins. For this reason the term "Anglo-Australia" has been selected to denote the political and educational structures of non-Aboriginal Australia.

#### 1.4 Aims of Research

The "last Tasmanian" belief has been the most significant factor limiting study into Tasmanian Aboriginal education to date. A major aim of the present work, therefore, is to contribute to the very slight corpus of research in this area. The present work thus complements the sociologically-based studies of educational provisions and outcomes for Tasmanian Aborigines by Randriamahefa (1979), Sculthorpe (1980) and Van Heyster (1981),<sup>8</sup> by analysing the history of Aboriginal education in the Furneaux Islands and placing this analysis within the broader context of national trends in Aboriginal race-relations policies and educational practices. It is hoped that the present research might contribute towards improvements in the quality of teaching of Aboriginal children, and teaching about Tasmanian Aborigines, by promoting a greater awareness amongst educationists of some important historical, social and political factors that are relevant to the situation of Tasmanian Aborigines, but have not previously been brought to public attention because of the widespread acceptance of the notion that Tasmanian Aborigines are an extinct race. Finally, it is anticipated that the present research might provide the basis for further studies which could contribute towards a greater understanding of, and respect for Aboriginal culture in Tasmania, and indeed throughout Australia.

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3. Haydon, T., and Jones, R., 1978: The Last Tasmanian, Tasmanian Film Corporation, Hobart.
4. It seems that Truganini may not have been the last of the traditional Tasmanian Aborigines, for E.H. Hallack, records that three Tasmanian Aboriginal women, abducted to Kangaroo Island by sealers, survived Truganini (Hallack, E.H., 1905: Kangaroo Island, W.K. Thomas and Company, Adelaide).
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7. This is the definition adopted by the Commonwealth Department of Aboriginal Affairs and other Commonwealth Government Departments.
8. Randriamahefa, K., (1979): op.cit.  
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## PART ONE

Comparative analysis of the social and political history  
of Cape Barren Island with nationwide trends.

## CHAPTER TWO

### National Survey of Aboriginal Racial Policies and Educational Consequences

#### 2.1 Chapter Outline

During the past two centuries of black and white culture contact in Australia, the evolution of racial interactions has been a complex and changeable process, aspects of which have been documented and interpreted by a plethora of researchers in recent years.<sup>1</sup> It is not the intention of this chapter to explore at length the intricacies of racial interactions in the social, economic, political cultural, educational or philosophical realms. Rather, the chapter provides a cursory survey of the major Aboriginal Affairs policies to have emerged in the Australian legislatures, and looks briefly at the educational consequences of such policies for Aborigines. This survey forms the basis for a comparative study of Tasmanian Government policies with salient national Aboriginal policies. Section 2.2 briefly discusses the nature of race-relations policies, whilst the survey of Australian Aboriginal policies is presented in section 2.3. Section 2.4 looks at the issue of Aboriginal participation in policy-making, whilst the final section of the chapter (2.5) analyses the status of Aboriginal education under the various policies.

#### 2.2 The Nature of Race-relations Policy

Due to the complexity of the Australian polity, with its levels of Local, State and Federal Governments coupled with varying degrees of

administrative control or oversight from Britain, Australia's policies towards Aborigines do not fall neatly into readily identifiable epochs. Aboriginal policy-making in Australia has generally relied on regional initiatives, for it was not until a national referendum in 1967 that the Federal Government gained any constitutional powers to legislate on Aboriginal affairs throughout Australia.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless the Australian Government can be generally regarded as the prime instigator of changes in Aboriginal policy in the twentieth century. In response to Commonwealth initiatives, the States have usually amended their own legislation in regard to Aborigines, although certain States have been traditionally tardier than others to accommodate to nationwide trends. Ever since the 1967 Referendum, the Federal Government has had the legal powers to over-ride the legislation of the States on Aboriginal Affairs, but it has, to this date, displayed a notable reticence to intervene in the affairs of States on Aboriginal, or indeed any other matters. The policies underlying such legislation towards Aborigines have, invariably, been regarded by the policy-makers as blueprints for particular models of political, social and economic interactions between Australia's Aboriginal minority and the dominant Anglo-Australian population. Policies entail strategies for implementation, and almost invariably Aboriginal education of one kind or another has been mooted by policy-makers as a key strategy in the implementation of one model of racial interaction or another.

## 2.3 Historical Account of Race-relations Policy Change

### 2.3.1 British Policy: The first fifty years

Prior to the British settlement of Australia, the Colonial Office in Britain decreed that cordial race-relations should be established between British colonists and indigenous peoples. Early Australian Governors were instructed to open friendly intercourse with Aborigines, and to invite them to join the ranks of the British Empire, albeit the lower ranks. Aborigines were to enjoy all rights and privileges of citizenship, and any whites who committed violent acts against them were to be brought to immediate and exemplary justice.<sup>3</sup> Australian Aborigines were generally prepared to extend friendship and hospitality to the British, and to adapt, in part, to the culture of the foreigners, but, through ignorance, disrespect and often outright contempt for the blacks, the British colonists transgressed Aboriginal law, and broke trust with the native Australians.<sup>4</sup> Aborigines who were at first content to live on the fringes of colonial society, soon either died from introduced disease, or went back to the bush to form an active resistance against the British invasion.

Three decades after British settlement in New South Wales, an undeclared war had broken out, a pattern which was to repeat itself upon the settlement of each Australian colony, though the intensity of the war, and the time that elapsed before its eruption varied from colony to colony. Settlers, soldiers, convicts and ex-convicts, equipped with firearm technology, began to ruthlessly murder Aborigines - sometimes in direct retaliation for attacks on white lives and raids upon property and stock; however, atrocities by whites were frequently perpetrated

from no better motives than the thrill of hunting, or the desire to rid the settled areas of an Aboriginal presence. Successive Secretaries of State for the Colonies had little control over events on the distant colonial frontiers and colonial administrators generally found it impossible to sustain the official British Aboriginal policy.

The black resistance was effective enough to present a real menace to the development of colonial interests, and after all, the colonial administrators represented the interests of British imperialism above other considerations. Massacres of Aboriginal men, women and children frequently went unpunished by the authorities.<sup>5</sup> On occasions, colonial administrators sanctioned violence against blacks by engaging the militia to carry out punitive raids.<sup>6</sup> So great was the carnage, that Reynolds (1981) maintains that twenty thousand Aborigines were killed before Federation.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.3.2 Segregation and the Protectorate System

In 1836 reports of atrocities in British colonies prompted British authorities to call for an Inquiry in the House of Commons into the conditions of indigenous peoples in Australian and other colonies.<sup>8</sup> The recommendations of the Inquiry gave a fillip to the establishment of Church Mission and Government Reserves,<sup>9</sup> under a Protectorate System that was to last well into the twentieth century. Following the Inquiry, Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote to New South Wales Governor George Gipps, issuing instructions for the establishment of the Port Phillip Protectorate, which was meant to serve as a model for an incipient Protectorate system throughout Australia. Gipps was instructed to ensure that the blacks be harboured in

inviolable Reserves, wherein they should be provided with all physical necessities for their survival. White Protectors were to be appointed to safeguard the rights of Aborigines and to ensure that white persons who committed acts of aggression or exploitation against them should be brought to justice. The Protectors were to dispense rations of food, clothing and blankets, wherever farming practices had made it impossible for them to pursue their traditional hunter-gatherer economy. The education and religious conversion of Aborigines was to be regarded as a matter of prime importance by the Protectors.<sup>10</sup>

Reserves subsequently set aside by Colonial, State and Federal Parliaments comprised remote and hitherto unalienated wasteland, uncoveted by white graziers. Between 1845 and 1912, all states including Tasmania and the Northern Territory, held inquiries into the conditions of Aborigines, and special laws were enacted towards them.<sup>11</sup> These "protection" laws, though originally benign in their intent, were nonetheless an effective mechanism for denying Aborigines the most basic of civil liberties. The protection laws varied in severity according to state legislation, as did the definition of an Aboriginal.<sup>12</sup> The main thrust of the protection, or segregation, legislation was that Aborigines required defence not only from violence and exploitation by whites, but from what were perceived to be racial propensities towards idleness, profligacy, immorality and alcoholism. Aborigines were legally prohibited from consuming alcohol, and whites supplying them with liquor were to be severely penalised. Aborigines were prevented from marrying whites without official consent, and white men who sexually exploited or habitually consorted with Aboriginal women were liable to strict penalties. The movement of Aborigines out of Reserves

was subject to the approval of designated white officials, and native police forces were formed in some States to round up Aborigines who were at liberty, and bring them to the Reserves. Aborigines were not permitted to work for wages and had their financial affairs strictly controlled. Such protection laws generally relegated Aborigines to a status of wardship, and denied them the right to vote. In certain States, persons who were not of full Aboriginal descent were entitled to apply for exemptions from such regulations, if they could demonstrate to the relevant authorities that they were of good character and possessed sufficient intellectual and social skills (within the Anglo-Australian understanding of such matters) to preclude them from requiring official protection.

In the latter nineteenth century and for much of the present century, most Aborigines were housed on Reserves, which were struggling from lack of Government support. Aborigines not resident on Reserves often worked for little or no wages on pastoral stations. To enforce the segregation laws, and to "protect" Aborigines in the manner outlined above, the mainland States formed Aboriginal Protection Boards, which were to last well into the twentieth century, when the assimilation of Aborigines was an object of national policy. There is an abundance of evidence to suggest that, in the attempts of the various Boards to "civilise" young Aborigines by placing them in domestic service or in labouring positions, the Boards became a means for the further exploitation of Aborigines. Blacks became, in effect, a source of cheap labour to white Australians.<sup>13</sup>

A significant theme of inquiries held by State Parliament was



that Aborigines were a dying race. This notion was a consequence of the misguided application of Darwinian theory<sup>14</sup> to the social realm. A report to the Queensland Parliament in the late nineteenth century, for example, stated that:

All that can be done for the old people is to smooth their way and let them pass off in ineradicable but tranquil savagery to the blackfellow's elysium.<sup>15</sup>

The dying race theory gave rise to the invocation of other such notable metaphors as "the march of progress", and governments were exhorted to do all they could to "smooth the pillow of a dying race" and make the "passing of the Aborigines as comfortable as possible". It was widely assumed that since Aborigines had so steadfastly refused to join the "march of progress" they must inevitably be trampled down by it.

Paul Hasluck, Commonwealth Minister for the Territories explained in 1952 how the "dying race" notion was a contributing factor to the neglect of Aborigines during the segregation period. He stated that the protection policy "expressed despair for their future and a rejection of the possibility of doing anything better".<sup>16</sup> Government apathy on Aboriginal affairs, and consequent parsimony towards Aboriginal welfare plunged Aboriginal people into a state of dire poverty. By the 1920's, most Aboriginal Reserves were in a state of utter physical degradation.<sup>17</sup>

The designers of Aboriginal policy intended to limit the numbers of "half-caste" children by placing legal restrictions on marriages or casual sexual relations between blacks and whites. Nonetheless, by 1937, "half-castes" comprised nearly 40% of the total Aboriginal

population in Australia.<sup>18</sup> This is indicative of the extent of hypocrisy associated with the protection laws which, quite contrary to their original intent, came to be enforced only upon Aborigines, and not upon whites. White men who had illegally fathered "half-caste" children were rarely held accountable by law for the support of their children. When assimilation was announced as the major national Aboriginal policy in 1937, the attention of the policy-makers came to be focused on the "half-caste" Aboriginal, to the exclusion of Aborigines of full descent.

### 2.3.3 Assimilation

In 1937, the first of a series of national conferences of State and Federal Government ministers concerned with Aboriginal Affairs was convened, the outcome of which was the formulation of a new Federal policy of assimilation. It was expected that the States would soon follow suit and amend their legislation. The conference stipulated that:

the destiny of the natives of aboriginal origin but not of the full blood lies in their ultimate absorption by the people of the Commonwealth.<sup>21</sup>

Under the new policy, the so-called "detribalised" Aborigines who were "not of the full blood", were eventually to be educated "to white standard" while their "semi-civilised" kin were to remain "under benevolent supervision, in their own tribal regions".<sup>20</sup> The early assimilation policy appears to have been based largely upon the notion of biological absorption of "half-caste" Aborigines, who were to be educated and trained to become fitting partners for whites.<sup>21</sup> The "dying race" notion still held sway in the minds of the proponents of

assimilation for it was assumed by some that the tribal people would continue to decline in numbers and eventually become extinct.<sup>22</sup> Amongst the strategies identified for the implementation of the early assimilation policy were that State authorities should direct all their efforts towards educating "to white standard" part-Aboriginal children. It was also proposed that there be a uniform definition of an Aboriginal, as well as uniform legislation on Aboriginal matters throughout Australia.<sup>23</sup>

World War II intervened in the implementation of the assimilation policy, and a sequel to the 1937 conference was not convened until 1948.<sup>24</sup> The second Ministers' conference did far more than the earlier one to spell out specific objectives for the assimilation of Aborigines. Among these were that the Commonwealth should gain the ultimate control of Aboriginal Affairs, and provide financial assistance to the States. The granting of full social service benefits to Aborigines was recommended, as were the upgrading of health and educational facilities for Aborigines, and the improvement of their wages and working conditions. Little, however, was done by way of implementing the objectives of the 1948 conference, or the objectives of subsequent conferences in the 1950s. In fact, it was not until the early 1960s that the assimilation policy gathered momentum. At the 1961 conference, a revised assimilation policy had extended its parameters to include all persons of Aboriginal descent, regardless of their racial mixture. The earlier emphasis on biological absorption had been superseded by the notion that Aborigines should relinquish their own culture in favour of the culture of mainstream white Australia. The 1961 assimilation policy stated:

in the view of all Australian governments ... all aborigines and part-aborigines are expected eventually to attain the same manner of living as other Australians and to live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. Thus, any special measures taken for aborigines and part-aborigines are regarded as temporary measures not based on colour but intended to meet their need for special care and assistance to protect them from any ill effects of sudden change and to assist them to make the transition from one stage to another in such a way as will be favourable to their future social, economic and political advancement.<sup>25</sup>

The assimilation policy, as it re-emerged in the twentieth century, was hailed by the policy-makers as a new and enlightened policy, and it was claimed that assimilation was based on the very laudable principles of equality of opportunity and the classless Australian society.<sup>26</sup> The policy-makers had not learned the historical lesson of the failure of the British colonial assimilation policy - a failure attributable to two main factors. Firstly Aboriginal people did not largely share the view of the policy-makers that Anglo-Australian culture was far superior to their own and consequently strove to retain their own culture, and secondly, because the prejudice of white Australians were such that Aborigines were effectively ostracised from the social ranks and employment structures of White Australia.

During the assimilation epoch, the Opposition Labor Party criticised the Federal Coalition Government, on the basis that assimilation was designed to block the continuance of Aboriginal culture, and on the grounds that the policy was administratively meaningless. In 1964, the Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, K. Beasley accused the government of gross hypocrisy for voting vastly inadequate funding to programs of Aboriginal housing, schooling, health,

adult education, trade training, land purchase and water supply. Beasley declaimed that:

One would think that if "assimilation" had any intelligent and humane meaning, it would mean equal wages with white men, but almost nowhere is this the case. You cannot live similarly to a European on one-sixth of a European wage, or less than one-sixth.<sup>27</sup>

By 1963, the assimilation policy had been amended so that Aborigines could "choose to attain a similar manner and standard of living as other Australians", and dropped the earlier requirement that Aborigines should observe the same customs, and adopt the same lifestyle and beliefs as other Australians.<sup>28</sup>

#### 2.3.4 Integration

Between 1967 and 1972, Federal Aboriginal policy was generally referred to as "integration". In 1972, the Coalition Government policy was outlined in a Ministerial statement to the House of Representatives. This policy, whilst purporting to value the aspects of Aboriginal culture, assumed that Aborigines would voluntarily adapt themselves to Anglo-Australian culture at some future date. This policy stated:

Fundamentally, the Government's aim is to have one Australian society in which all Australians - including Aboriginal Australians - will have equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities. We seek in this that Aborigines will achieve effective and respected places in a single Australian society. But at the same time they will be encouraged to preserve and develop their own culture, languages, traditions and arts, which will become living elements in the diverse culture of our society. The Government recognises that individual Aborigines have a right to decide for themselves at what pace and to what extent they come to identify themselves with that society. We believe that they will do this more readily and happily when they are drawn to it voluntarily and when their membership of it encourages them to maintain and take pride in their identity, their traditions and their culture. The thought of the separate development of Aborigines as a long-term aim is completely alien to the Government's objectives.<sup>29</sup>

Tatz and Chambers were highly critical of integration policies as they perceived them in 1975, on the basis that such policies required:

that Aborigines accommodate to white models, but allows, or even purports to encourage, the retention of some aspects of their culture. But it is the ethnocentric ideology of integration that determines which aspects are valuable and worthy of preservation and perpetuation. Until now it has been mulga wood or polystyrene boomerangs; goannas, turtles and spears on an endless variety of table linen; One Pound Jimmy and Albert Namatjira on our postage stamps and bark painting on our dollar notes.<sup>30</sup>

Following the 1967 Referendum, the Federal Government set up a Council for Aboriginal Affairs comprising H.C. Coombs, B.G. Dexter and W.E.H. Stanner, none of whom was Aboriginal. An Office of Aboriginal Affairs was also established to disburse moneys to Government-approved projects. Lippmann makes the point that the 10 million dollars made available to the Office of Aboriginal Affairs had not increased Aboriginal control "since Aboriginal projects of any kind still had to be supervised by whites".<sup>31</sup>

#### 2.3.5 Self-Determination and Self-Management

After gaining office late in 1972, Labor Prime Minister, Gough Whitlam pledged his Government's support of Aboriginal self-determination, claiming that a basic object in Aboriginal Affairs was to:

restore to the Aboriginal people of Australia their lost power of self-determination in economic, social and political affairs.<sup>32</sup>

To implement the Whitlam Government's commitment to restoring "as far as possible the traditional association of Aboriginal communities to their

land,<sup>33</sup> an unprecedented amount of funding was allocated to Aboriginal Affairs. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs was upgraded to a department and a network of Aboriginal committees was set up to advise the Commonwealth Government on matters of Aboriginal education, housing, legal matters, health and land rights.

After the Liberal/National Party Government regained office in 1975, the declared Government policy was one of "self-management". This policy specified that Aborigines should play:

a leading role in setting long-term goals and objectives, expenditure priorities and program evaluations, as well as assuming responsibility for the success of the programs adopted.<sup>34</sup>

However, Lippmann has demonstrated that under the "self-management" policy, Aborigines had less chance to manage Aboriginal programs, since the budget to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs had been significantly curtailed.<sup>35</sup>

On resuming office in 1983, the Federal Labor Party reiterated its commitment to Aboriginal self-determination. The manner in which this policy differed from the Liberal "self-management" policy was not spelt out. Clyde Holding, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs stated in 1983 that:

We believe in Aboriginal self-determination and that means that Aboriginal organisations have got to not merely formulate policy but take responsibility for the policy decisions they formulate.<sup>36</sup>

Holding's perfunctory statement does little to indicate precisely what is meant by the policy. Michael Mansell, a Tasmanian Aboriginal

solicitor, has criticised the policy on these grounds. He has interpreted the various manifestations of the policy since its adoption as follows:

In the 1970s self-determination was viewed as increasing Aboriginal access to the goods and services of the community. Later on, the policy was developed so that Aborigines were able to administer their own services to their community. In the 1980s self-determination has meant that Aboriginal take over of the administrative functions of services delivered to Aborigines is a concept acceptable to governments.<sup>37</sup>

According to Mansell, the policy is so "wishy-washy" as to be virtually meaningless, for it can be interpreted by Governments to mean whatever is politically expedient at the time. The inherent danger of such unspecificity is that it can be a means by which Governments can structure Aboriginal ideas to accord with their own notions of acceptability, and any ideas or proposals put forward by Aboriginal individuals or groups can be conveniently ignored, vetoed or simply not funded whenever such proposals do not accord with preconceived notions. The failure by the Federal Government to introduce uniform national land rights legislation, despite widespread support of such a move from Aboriginal organisations, can be regarded as an instance of the Commonwealth Government drawing its "cut-off" point, at the implementation of proposals from Aboriginal organisations.<sup>38</sup>

## 2.4 Aboriginal Participation in policy-making

A common factor in most Aboriginal policies has been the apparent schism between the well meant, but paternalistic rhetoric of Government policy, with the ugly realities of Aboriginal poverty, ill health, and lack of educational opportunities. All too often,



Governments have been prepared to "smooth dying pillows", or to sanction the amelioration of living standards through various policies, provided commitment to these notions do not drain the resources of Treasury to any significant extent. Another common factor to all official Aboriginal policies has been that they have been designed by whites, ostensibly in the interests of Aborigines and developed and implemented by persons with little knowledge of Aboriginal culture or understanding of their particular needs and aspirations. Even the self-determination policy was formulated at a meeting almost exclusively attended by white politicians or bureaucrats.<sup>39</sup> Prior to 1972, it was rarely considered important to involve Aboriginal people in the planning or administration of designs for their "advancement". For the most part Aborigines have been regarded by the policy-makers as passive objects rather than subjects in the policy-making process.

Yet Aborigines have in fact, attempted to influence Government policies from the beginnings of colonisation until the present day. The guerilla wars of the early colonial period have not escaped the attention of the historians of the past decade, although the bases of Aboriginal grievances have been frequently glossed over. During the twentieth century, however, Aboriginal attempts to influence policy have received less attention. Aborigines have tried to alter the administration of Aboriginal affairs through acts of civil disobedience, strikes, petitions, demonstrations, forming Aboriginal organisations, writing books and journals, political lobbying, holding conferences and by standing for Parliament.<sup>40</sup>

During the 1930s for instance, a time when Aboriginal oppression by Protection Boards was particularly harsh, a group of Aboriginal trade

unionists in New South Wales used the mechanisms of the Anglo-Australian society to institute a sophisticated defence of Aboriginal rights, and call for the revision of existing government policy. The work of activists William Cooper, William Ferguson and John Patten received the political support of most Aboriginal leaders of the day. As a result of their actions, an Aborigines Progressive Association was formed, a series of conferences on Aboriginal affairs convened by and for Aborigines, an Aboriginal manifesto entitled Aborigines Claim Citizens Rights was written, and a newspaper, the Australian Abo Call published. A national day of mourning was called on Australia Day, 1937 - a tradition which is celebrated to the present day.<sup>41</sup> Out of the Aboriginal organisation formed after World War II, a National Aboriginal Consultative Committee was formed in 1973.<sup>42</sup> This was transformed into a National Aboriginal Conference in 1977 to provide a forum for the expression of Aboriginal views, and members of the Conference were expected, among other requirements, to "monitor the progress of Government policy in relation to matters of health, education, employment, social security, land rights and the like"<sup>43</sup>. The National Aboriginal Conference was disbanded by the Commonwealth Government in 1985, and has not as yet, been re-instituted.

## 2.5 Aboriginal Education

It was not until 26 years of British settlement had passed that any formal schooling was offered to Aborigines in New South Wales. During the latter eighteenth century, literacy was largely restricted to the wealthy free settlers who formed the gentry of early Anglo-Australian society. Children of the gentry received an elementary

training in literacy and numeracy skills from privately engaged tutors, and were later exposed to a more liberal education in expensive boarding schools, or were sent "home" to be educated in British public schools.<sup>44</sup> By the early nineteenth century, however, the demography of the Australian population had altered significantly, and an inordinately high proportion of the "lower order" social classes comprising convicts, ex-convicts and their children had developed. Added to the threat of Aboriginal insurgency on the fringe of settlement, colonial society was threatened with revolt or anarchy from the "lower orders".

According to Reeves (1981), formal education was offered at first to Aborigines and "currency" children, not from radical or philanthropic motives, but with the intent of obviating future unrest, by offering them a schooling which would inculcate a set of mores that served the interests of the colonial elite. Such an education was tacitly designed to placate and subordinate the recipients. Aborigines and working class children were not offered the liberal education granted to children of wealthy parents, but were taught the basics of literacy and numeracy as an adjunct to the learning of Christian dogma. Such an education inculcated the ethic that one should strive to be "poor but honest", and loyal, useful servants to the colonial elite. Boys' education was geared towards the simple trades, whilst girls were trained in the skills of home management and domestic service.<sup>45</sup>

The validity of Reeves' theory can be tested by its application to Governor Macquarie's Aboriginal Institute, which commenced in Black Town, Parramatta in 1814. The aims of the school, the design of its curriculum, and the anticipated employment of its graduates are outlined

as follows by William Shelley, the first manager of the Institute, in a letter to Governor Macquarie:

In order to their improvement and civilization, let there be a Public Establishment Containing one Set of Apartments for boys, and another Separate Set for girls; let them be taught reading, writing, or religious education, the Boys, manual labour, agriculture, mechanical arts, etc., the Girls, sewing, knitting, spinning, or such useful employment as are suitable for them; let them be married at a Suitable age, and Settled with steady religious Persons over them from the very beginning to see that they Continued their employment, so as to be able to support their families, and who had Skill sufficient to encourage and Stimulate them by proper Motives to exertion.<sup>46</sup>

Shelley's letter indicates that Aboriginal education did, as Reeves maintains, serve as a form of social engineering. It is not maintained here, however, that there was any conscious recognition by early educators of Aborigines or colonial administrators, that education was deliberately designed to bolster the established hegemony, but rather that this occurred in a more intuitive fashion. On a philosophical level, educational administrators meant to bestow upon what were perceived to be poor, benighted savages, "the blessings of civilisation and Christianity", and assumed as a matter of course that Aborigines would accept such "gifts" without reservation. Social stratification can be regarded as a consequence, rather than a cause of the education experiences selected for Aborigines.

Initially, it appears that the Aboriginal children fared well in Macquarie's Institution, for Macquarie reported to Lord Bathurst in 1822 that "the children of the Natives have as good and ready an aptitude for learning as those of Europeans, and they are also susceptible of being completely civilised".<sup>47</sup> A test of Aboriginal achievement had come three years earlier, when the Aboriginal children from the Institute

competed against 100 white scholars in a public examination to test "the rudiments of education, moral and religious", and an Aboriginal girl of fourteen, who had experienced only three of four years schooling, was awarded first prize in the competition.<sup>48</sup> The girl's achievement was quite remarkable when one considers that she had successfully learnt a foreign language and mastered many aspects of literacy and numeracy skills that were strange to her own culture, in less than four years. She had also become well versed in the dogma of a religion that was conceptually far removed from the religious notions inherent in her own culture. All this had been learnt from a pedagogic system that was quite alien to the methods of traditional Aboriginal education.

Although Macquarie was delighted by the early success of his experiment in Aboriginal education, his joy was short-lived, for the Institution foundered in 1825 when it amalgamated with a nearby Orphan School.<sup>49</sup> Parents had enticed their children away to the bush. One interpretation of the phenomenon, which was to characterise most future attempts to educate Aboriginal children in Anglo-Australian institutions, is provided by C.D. Rowley. He considers that the parents were happy enough to leave the children with missionaries, where they would be fed and cared for, at least "until they realised the implications of the fight for the minds of the children in the missionary efforts to break the continuity of indigenous tradition".<sup>50</sup> It was during the early adolescent years that conflicting demands between Anglo-Australian and Aboriginal culture intensified, for during these years, initiation rites were undertaken by both sexes, and marriages of girls to promised husbands were an integral part of Aboriginal culture.

Anglo-Australian culture offered Aborigines a position only in the lower echelons of society, on an equivalent social footing, perhaps, to that of freed convicts. Aborigines must have been repulsed by visions of floggings, poverty, crime and other miserable crudities of the "lower order" lifestyle. The genteel lifestyle of the colonial elite must have appeared far more attractive to them. Had Anglo-Australian society offered Aborigines a higher position in the social strata, the history of race-relations in Australia might have taken a different turn. It seems reasonable to assume that Aborigines felt themselves entitled to a more generous compensation for the loss of their land than the "blessings of civilisation and Christianity", which amounted to little more than a life of labour, brutality, exploitation and servitude.

A common attribute of Aboriginal education in Anglo-Australian institutions has been the separation of children from their parents. In 1814, Shelley wrote:

The chief difficulty appeared to me to be the separation of the children from their parents, but I am informed that in many cases this could be easily done.<sup>51</sup>

The separation principle was so important to Anglo-Australian educators, because it was understood, though never explicitly stated, that education is a prime means by which culture, with its matrix of language, attitudes, values, assumptions, beliefs, customs, rituals, world-view, knowledge, methods of inquiry, religion, arts, skills and technology can be handed down from one generation to the next. Many early Anglo-Australian educators enforced the separation of children from parents because they perceived Aboriginal culture to be inherently

evil and insidious. In 1860, for instance, a Committee reporting to the South Australian Parliament stated that:

The Committee, however, submit, as their strong conviction, that permanent benefit, to any appreciable extent, from attempts to Christianise the natives can only be expected by separation of children from their parents and evil influences of the tribe to which they belong. However harshly this recommendation may grate on the feelings of pseudo-philanthropists, it would in reality be a work of mercy to the rising generation of aborigines.<sup>52</sup>

The separation of Aboriginal children from parents was favoured by the authorities until well into the twentieth century when, as an object of assimilation policy, children, especially those of non-Aboriginal paternity, were forcibly removed from the Reserves and placed in homes for "half-castes", which were meant to prepare them for an eventual induction into white Australian society.<sup>53</sup> The "rising generation notion" invoked in the above report is common to the rhetoric of Aboriginal education. It was thought that while no hope could be held for the "old people", who should be left to die in heathen savagery, the only hope for the salvation of the Aboriginal race lay in the education of the "rising generation". Reeves demonstrates, however, that the "rising generation" notion was applied, not only to Aboriginal youth, but to the children of convicts, and other off-spring of working class Anglo-Australian society.<sup>54</sup>

The curriculum provided for the "rising generation" of Aborigines has, for the most part, not differed vastly from that offered to working class children in Anglo-Australian schools. On this point, Aboriginal educationist, John Budby has stated:

Ever since the first school for Aborigines was established by Governor Macquarie, there seems to have been an extraordinary lack of interest by educational authorities in the development

of appropriate educational theories, policies and practices for Aborigines. The actual practices followed have, inevitably been a watered-down version of the methods and curricula applied to Anglo-Australians.<sup>55</sup>

For the most part, the school experiences of most Aborigines under the segregation system were far from rewarding. Though the curriculum to which they were exposed was essentially "a watered-down version" of that of other Anglo-Australian schools, Aborigines were frequently not admitted to schools with white scholars. Under the segregation system, Aborigines who were not permanently housed in Reserves, either resided on cattle-stations or itinerated in search of work. On the various cattle stations, many Aboriginal children received no education, because men selected as managers of the station were expected, among their other duties, to conduct lessons in literacy and numeracy. Men were chosen for such positions, and paid teachers' salaries by Governments, not by the criteria of their teaching qualifications or abilities, but on the basis that they had sufficient practical skills to manage a pastoral station.<sup>56</sup> Not surprisingly, little attention was paid to Aboriginal education.

The first national survey into Aboriginal education was probably undertaken by Tindale, who found that teachers who were provided for Aboriginal children were, almost without exception, unqualified or poorly qualified, and lacked any understanding of Aboriginal culture. Most classrooms containing Aboriginal children were found to be segregated from contact with white pupils. In many States, Tindale observed that most state Governments did not involve themselves directly in Aboriginal education, but left the matter to missions which struggled from lack of government subsidy.<sup>57</sup> Educational segregation on



racial grounds was frequently brought about by white parents withdrawing their children from schools in which Aborigines were permitted enrolment. As a consequence of such actions, Aboriginal children were often excluded from schooling.<sup>58</sup>

When assimilation was declared the favoured national Aboriginal policy in 1937, it was recognised by the policy-makers that the very deficient education system offered to Aborigines under the segregation policy had ill-equipped them to relinquish their position as social pariahs in white Australia. The major objective of the assimilation period, therefore, was to expose Aborigines who were to become assimilated, to a period of tuition for citizenship. The foremost strategies designed for this were educational ones - schooling facilities for Aboriginal children were to be upgraded in settlements, Aboriginal children were to be sent away to boarding school, and provisions for adult education and vocational training of Aborigines were to be extended.

During the latter assimilation phase in the 1960s certain educators of Aborigines began to espouse a theory of "cultural deficit" derived from Northern America. According to the deficit theory, certain environmental or genetic factors were thought to handicap the so-called "disadvantaged" child in the educational process and in the subsequent race for occupational and economic status. Children were classified as disadvantaged according to the criteria of race, social class, ethnic origin, economic status or geographic location, and compensatory education programs were designed as antidotes to the perceived limitations in the children's background experience. Restricted

language development was considered to be the most crucial of the children's deficiencies, as this was thought to impair the operation of their higher cognitive functioning. Disadvantaged children were also thought to possess poor self-images, to be poorly motivated and to have physiological and psychological inadequacies.<sup>59</sup> According to McConnochie and Russell, compensatory education programs which were extended towards Australian Aborigines mostly took the form of:

- early childhood and pre-school programs, designed to provide a set of perceptual, cognitive and linguistic experiences which will develop desirable cognitive and linguistic skills in disadvantaged children;
- intervention in home environments, to provide mothers with new child-rearing techniques which will develop appropriate attitudinal, cognitive, or linguistic behaviours;<sup>60</sup>

In the early 1970s the "cultural difference" school of thought emerged in the United States of America, to counter the popular cultural deficit theory. Advocates of the cultural difference model maintained that educational institutions should grant equal value to cultures or social groups that are not white and middle class, and that schools should alter existing curricula, pedagogic practices, and the "hidden curriculum" of values and expectations, to cater for culturally-different children.<sup>61</sup> In Australia, Kelly and McConnochie were in the vanguard of academics who decried the cultural deficit model and warned that compensatory education programs could amount to a subtle form of racism:

Compensary education may indeed debase rather than enhance the self-concept of children who are made to feel that the group to which they belong is inferior. Insofar as the child in question is required to model himself on white standards of conduct, the school experience may undermine his self-confidence and provide a barrier rather than a stimulus for the further learning.<sup>62</sup>

The major educational initiative for Aborigines under the brief integration policy was the introduction of educational grants by the Commonwealth Government. The aim of these grants was to provide financial and other incentives to allow Aborigines to remain longer in, or return to, educational institutions. The Aboriginal Study Grants Scheme was introduced in 1969 and the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme the following year; both schemes remain in operation to the present date although since the beginning of 1986, they have been known as assistance, rather than grants schemes. The schemes provide allowances to the students or their parents to relieve them of most educational costs. The schemes, for secondary and tertiary students, also contain a provision for extra assistance in the form of supplementary tuition, where the student is experiencing some difficulty in a subject. The secondary grants scheme was reviewed in 1976 and continued after Professor B.H. Watts found an improvement in the self-images of Aboriginal children as a result of the educational allowances.<sup>63</sup> Watts, however, found it difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding alterations in upper-secondary retention rates because of the dearth of statistics available from schools pertaining to Aboriginal students. The Study Assistance scheme is presently under evaluation.

In 1975, an Aboriginal Consultative Group reported to the Schools Commission, outlining their aspirations in regard to Aboriginal education. The Committee wrote:

We see education as the most important strategy for achieving realistic self-determination for the Aboriginal people of Australia. We do not see education as a method of producing an anglicised Aborigine but rather as a instrument for creating an informed community with intellectual and technological skills, in harmony with our culture and values and identity. We wish to be Aboriginal citizens in a changing Australia.<sup>64</sup>

The National Aboriginal Education Committee was formed in 1977 to advise the Minister for Education and his Department on the educational needs of the Aboriginal people. Its Rationale Aims and Objectives comprise appendix A. The vision the AEC articulated in 1975 became the focus of the NAEC's rationale, aims and objectives. Since 1977, the NAEC's directions have extended from an advisory role to one of some administrative responsibility. In addition to advising the Commonwealth Department of Education, the Committee now advises other Government departments, monitors research, and convenes conferences on Aboriginal education. The mechanism designed to implement the policy of educational self-determination for Aborigines is a network of Aboriginal education consultative groups which consult with local communities, and speak on their behalf to State Governments and to the NAEC, which in turn advises the Commonwealth Government and its Departments. Despite the limitations of the Self-determination policy, in section 2.3.5, the Federal policy has allowed a greater participation of Aborigines in the delivery of services to Aboriginal education, and the policy represents what are probably the first attempts by the Anglo-Australian polity to consult and involve Aborigines in aspects of policy development, planning, administration or teaching in Aboriginal education within Anglo-Australian institutions.

## NOTES

1. A small selection of this literature on Aboriginal and Anglo-Australian race-relations is:

Rowley, C.D. 1970: The Destruction of Aboriginal Society Australian National University Press, Canberra.

Woolmington, J. (ed.), 1973: Aborigines in Colonial Society 1788-1850: from "Noble Savage" to "Rural Pest", Cassell, Melbourne.

Reece, R.H.W., 1974: Aborigines and Colonists: Aborigines and Colonial Society in New South Wales in the 1830s and 1840s, Sydney University Press, Sydney.

Gale, G.E. and Brookman, A., 1975: Race Relations in Australia - the Aborigines, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Sydney.

Roberts, J., 1981: Massacres to Mining: the colonisation of Aboriginal Australia, Dove Communications, Blackburn, Victoria.

Lippmann, L., 1981: Generations of Resistance, Longman, Melbourne.

Reynolds, H., 1981: The Other Side of the Frontier, James Cook University, Townsville.

2. Prior to the 1967 referendum the Australian Federal Government was restricted by constitutional mandate to Aboriginal administration in the Northern Territory since 1911.
3. Governor Hunter to Duke of Portland, 22 February, 1796, HRA series I, vol I, p.689.  
  
Lord Hobart to Acting-Governor King, 30 January, 1802, HRA series I, vol. III, pp.366-7.  
  
Lord Hobart to Lieutenant-Governor Collins, 7 February, 1803, HRA series I, vol IV, pp.12-13.  
  
King George IV to Brisbane, T., 5 February, 1821, HRA series I, vol X, p.598.
4. Reynolds, H., (1981) op.cit. gives a comprehensive interpretation of how the Aboriginal obligation system and other elements of Aboriginal law were breached by the colonists.

5. When, for example, seven white men were brought to trial and eventually hanged for participating in the massacre of Aborigines at Myall Creek, in the New South Wales Colony in 1837, the accused freely admitted their actions, but protested that they had not been aware that the murder of Aborigines was considered criminal, since the killing of blacks had occurred so frequently before, and had gone unpunished by the authorities. (Keck, H. to High Sheffiff, 21 December, 1838, in: Colonies Australia (1837-40), British Parliamentary Papers, vol. 5, Irish University Press, Shannon, Ireland.
6. King, P.G. to King, J., 21 August, 1801, HRA series I, vol. III, p.250.  
  
Macquarie, L. to Earl Bathurst, 4 April, 1817, HRA series I, vol. IX, pp.362-4.  
  
Macquarie, L. to Earl Bathurst, 31 December, 1824, HRA series I, vol. XI, p.430.
7. Reynolds, H., 1981: op.cit. p.165.
8. Report from the Select Committee on Aborigines (British Settlements), 1837, vol. VII, no. 425, British Parliamentary Papers.
9. Prior to the inquiry in the House of Commons, several Aboriginal reserves or "institutions" had been established in New South Wales. These were ill-fated, as was the Port Phillip Protectorate promoted by Lord Glenelg. Yet despite the lack of success of the early missions and Protectorates, all Colonies including Tasmania, and the Northern Territory, were operating Aboriginal Reserves before Federation.
10. Lord Glenelg to Gipps, G., 31 January, 1838, in: Colonies Australia, vol. 5, op.cit., pp.374-5.
11. Elkin analysed the corpus of State and Commonwealth legislation towards Aborigines in 1944, but did not acknowledge the existence of a Tasmanian Act for Aboriginal "half-castes":

An Act to provide for the subdivision of the Cape Barren Island Reserve, and for other Purposes, George V, no. 16, Tasmania.

Elkin, A.P., 1944: Citizenship for Aborigines, Australian and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney, pp.81-90.

This Act displays many common elements to the segregationist legislation of other States, a fact that has been also overlooked by Professor Rowley (Rowley, C.D., 1970: op.cit., p.227).

12. For a comparison of regional variations in the definition of an "Aboriginal" prior to 1944, see Elkin, A.P., 1944, op.cit. pp.81-86.

13. See, for example:

Patten, J.T. and Ferguson, W., 1938: Aborigines Claim Citizen Rights: a statement of the case for the Aborigines Progressive Association, Aborigines Progressive Association, Sydney.

Morgan, A. and Bostock, G., 1983: Lousy Little Sixpence, documentary film, Canberra.

Horner, J., 1974: Vote Ferguson for Aboriginal Freedom Australian and New Zealand Book Company, Sydney.

Gammage, B. and Markus, A., 1982: all that dirt: aborigines 1938 Australian National University, Canberra.

The Australian Abo Call, 1938, 6 monthly editions, copies held at Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.

14. Darwin, C., 1859: On the Origin of the Species, Murray, London.
15. "Report by W.E. Parry-Okeden, Commissioner of Police, on the North Queensland Aborigines and the Native Police", Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Assembly, vol. 11, C.A. 10-1897, Queensland Parliamentary Papers, p.39.
16. Hasluck, P., 1952: "From Protection to Welfare" Address to Biennial Conference of the Australian National Council of Women, Melbourne, 14 October, transcript supplied by Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.
17. The Australian Aborigines, reference paper, Australian Information Service, Canberra.
18. Commonwealth Year Book, 1937, Australian Government, p.242.
19. Aboriginal Welfare: Initial conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal authorities held at Canberra, 21-23 April, 1937, conference proceedings, p.3.
20. Ibid.
21. For a more detailed explication of the notion of biological absorption, see:
- Neville, O., 1951: "The Half-Caste in Australia" Mankind vol. 4, no. 7.
- Neville was a Commissioner of Native Affairs for Western Australia, and one of the policy-makers at the 1937 National Conference.
22. Aboriginal Welfare, 1937, conference, op.cit. p.16.
23. Ibid, p.3.

24. Conference of Commonwealth and State Aboriginal Authorities, Parliament House, Canberra, 3 February, 1948.
25. Commonwealth and State Ministers' Conference on Native Welfare, Canberra, January 26-27, 1961.
26. Hasluck, P., 1951: "The Native Welfare Conference", speech to the House of Representatives, Parliamentary Debates: Representatives, 18 October.
27. Beazley, K., 1964: Dispossession and Disease or Dignity?, mimeo, Australian Labor Party, Canberra, p.8.
28. Aboriginal Welfare: Conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, Darwin 11-12 July, 1963, conference proceedings, p.3.
29. Howson, P., 1972: "Ministerial Statement by the Minister for the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts", 23 February, Parliamentary Debates: Representatives, 22 February to 23 March.
30. Tatz, C.M. & Chambers, B., 1975: "Cultural Accommodation: the Armidale Experience", in Edgar, E.D. (ed.), Sociology of Australian Education pp.218-231, McGraw Hill, Sydney, p.220.
31. Lippmann, L., 1981: op.cit. p.71.
32. Whitlam, E.G.: "Statement by the Prime Minister to the Ministerial Aboriginal Affairs Council", Adelaide, 6 April, 1974.
33. Ibid.
34. Viner, I., 1978: "Department of Aboriginal Affairs Report, Ministerial statement", Parliamentary Debates: Representatives, 24 November.
35. Lippmann, L., 1981: op.cit., p.83.
36. Holding, C., 1983 in: Aboriginal Newsletter, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Canberra, April edition.
37. Mansell, M. to researcher, 14 November, 1983, written communication.
38. For example, at the Australian Labor Party biennial conference, 1-11 July, 1986, Hobart, a decision was taken not to implement national landrights legislation, despite strong support for such a move by most Aboriginal organisations.
39. Seminar for Aboriginal Affairs administrators, 4-9 March, 1973, Batchelor, Northern Territory, reported in:  
New Policies in Aboriginal Affairs, 1976, Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra.

See especially p.3: "The Seminar did not include representation of persons of Aboriginal descent so that any views in the paper need to be tested by Aboriginals themselves".



40. See, for example, Lippmann, L., 1981, op.cit.,  
 Horner, J., 1974 op.cit.,  
 Morgan, A. and Bostock, G., op.cit.,  
Australian Abo Call, op.cit.
41. The National Aborigines Day Observance Committee now organises a week of celebrations annually. National Aborigines Week is a legacy of the first national day of mourning, organised by Cooper, Patten, Ferguson and others on January 26, 1937.
42. National Aboriginal Conference: Establishment, Role and Functions, 1982, Green Apple Graphics, Canberra, p.5.
43. Ibid, p.12.
44. Reeves, N., 1981: The Teaching of Reading in Colonial Australia 1788-1856, History Honours thesis, Murdoch University, Perth.
45. Ibid.
46. Shelley, W. to Macquarie, L., 8 April, 1814, HRA series I, vol. VIII, p.371.
47. Macquarie, L. to Lord Bathurst, 27 July, 1822, HRA series I, vol. X, p.677.
48. Sydney Gazette, 17 February, 1819, in Woolmington, J., 1973: op.cit., p.25.
49. Brisbane, T. to Earl Bathurst, 3 October, 1825, HRA, series I, vol. XI, p.864.
50. Rowley, C.D., 1970: op.cit. p.91.
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52. "Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council upon 'the Aborigines'", Proceedings and Papers of Parliament, South Australia, 1860, vol. III, no. 165, p.6.
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55. Budby, J., 1982: "Issues, Outcomes and Actions in Aboriginal Education", Keynote paper to Education Officers training workshop, 2-7 May, Goulburn College of Advanced Education, p.37.
56. Horner, J., op.cit., p.13-14.

57. Tindale, N.B., 1940: "Survey of the Half-Caste Problem in South Australia", Proceedings of the Royal Society, South Australian Branch, 1939-40, vol. XLI, pp.125-133.
58. Horner, J. op.cit., p.134.
59. Some advocates of the "cultural deficit" model are:  
  
Gordon, E.W., 1965: "Characteristics of socially disadvantaged children", Review of Educational Research, vol. 35, no. 5, pp.375-388.  
  
Schultz, C.B. and Aurbach, H.A., 1971: "The Usefulness of Cumulative Deprivation as an Explanation of Educational Deficiencies", Merrill-Palmer Quarterly, vol. 17, no. 1, pp.27-40.
60. McConnochie, K. and Russell, A., 1982: Early Childhood Services for Aboriginal Children, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p.25.
61. Some American writers who have expounded this view are represented in:  
  
Keddie, N. (Ed.) 1973: Tinker Tailor: The Myth of Cultural Deprivation, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, England.
62. Kelly, M.E. and McConnochie, K., 1974: "Compensatory Education: a subtle form of racism?" Australian Journal of Education, vol. 18, no. 1, p.32.
63. Watts, B.H., 1976: Access to Education: an evaluation of the Aboriginal Secondary Grants Scheme, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.
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## CHAPTER THREE

### Social and Political History of the Cape Barren Island Community

#### 3.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter traces the most significant political events to have affected Tasmanian Aborigines and their descendants in the Furneaux Islands between 1798 and 1985. In this context, State Government legislation, parliamentary papers, reports, and newspaper articles are analysed in order to assess the degree of convergence between Tasmanian Government Aboriginal policies and the salient national policies surveyed in the previous chapter. Although educational matters are considered to be a very significant part of the social and political milieu on Cape Barren Island, the present chapter excludes any detailed analysis of curriculum or teacher/community interactions, as this is dealt with in the second part of the study. Educational matters are referred to only insofar as they pertain to teacher, community, and government interactions at the higher political levels. Section 3.2 of this chapter presents an historiography of Aboriginal/sealing society in the early nineteenth century, and contrasts this with the society of the neighbouring Government-sponsored Aboriginal Establishment. Section 3.3 outlines the development of the "half-caste" community between 1848, when it received its first token of official recognition, and 1881, when a reserve was created for "half-castes" on Cape Barren Island; section 3.4 discusses the political history of the reserve from 1881 until it was phased out in 1950; finally, section 3.5 outlines the most

significant events on Cape Barren Island from 1951 until the present day.

### 3.2 The Aboriginal/sealing community and the Aboriginal Establishment (1798-1849)

#### 3.2.1 British Aboriginal Policy

Instructions issued to Lieutenant Governor David Collins by the British Colonial Office were in a similar vein to those previously issued to New South Wales administrators. Collins was enjoined to open a friendly intercourse with the natives, to adopt a conciliatory approach, and to protect them from violent acts by British subjects.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, such a policy was even less sustainable in the Island colony than in New South Wales. Conditions in the incipient Van Diemen's Land settlements were hardly conducive to social harmony: supplies were scarce, and hunters were despatched to the bush to hunt kangaroo<sup>2</sup>, thus competing with local Aborigines for a major food resource. Yet it was not the hunters who fired the opening volleys of the Van Diemen's Land racial war, but the militia. In a blatant disregard of British policy, a party of drunken redcoats perpetrated an unprovoked attack on a party of Aboriginal men, women and children, killing a great number of them.<sup>3</sup> The blacks retaliated and a protracted "Black War" began in the Colony. Like their counterparts in New South Wales, the Island blacks offered a spirited, but ill-fated resistance against the firearms of the whites. Before thirty years of British settlement had elapsed, the Van Diemen's Land clans had been decimated.

Van Diemen's Land,<sup>4</sup> because of its small size, insular nature, and relatively early British settlement, can be viewed, as Turnbull puts

it, "as a microcosm of colonial development".<sup>5</sup> The countless atrocities against Aborigines, for which Tasmania has received world-wide notoriety, were widespread throughout the Australian continent. Nor was the impotence of early Van Diemen's Land administrators to uphold British Aboriginal policy endemic to the Island colony. Prior to 1830, Van Diemen's Land administrators experimented with a variety of ways to solve the "Aboriginal problem", including the issue of proclamations to Aborigines, hanging individual blacks accused of murder, and placing a bounty on the heads of Aborigines. The most ambitious of these strategies was the "Black Line" of 1830, a project initiated by the Aborigines Committee, set up to advise Governor Arthur. White settlers and soldiers throughout the Colony collaborated in an attempt to drive Aborigines onto the Tasman Peninsula, where they could be cornered and captured. The blacks slipped through the cordon, and the "Line" failed. To Arthur, the project was an expensive and embarrassing fiasco.<sup>6</sup>

The tactics eventually condoned by Arthur were pacification, protection and exile from white settlement, methods which, as Chapter Two has shown, were adopted by other Australian States under the segregation policy. In 1829, Arthur appointed George Augustus Robinson, a bricklayer by trade, and evangelist by disposition, as "Protector and Conciliator" of the warring Van Diemen's Land tribes. Robinson was to learn some of the languages of the Aborigines and persuade them to desist from violence against the colonists. His first station was on Bruny Island, where he dispensed clothes, blankets and food to local Aborigines. In the next five years, Robinson organised some of these people to take him on a number of expeditions around Van Diemen's Land, with the objective of contacting other clans, and persuading them to

accompany him to a haven which was to have been beyond the pale of British settlement, and safe from ravagings of guns, and the ambit of British jurisprudence.<sup>7</sup> Robinson's Establishment removed to Bass's Strait in 1830.

### 3.2.2 The Bass Strait Aboriginal/sealing community

The sealing industry commenced in Bass's and Banks' Straits in 1798, five years before a permanent British presence was established on the mainland of Van Diemen's Land. The exploitation of the seals by Sydney-based merchant companies was so ruthlessly conducted that after a mere eight years, large-scale commercial sealing operations were no longer viable.<sup>8</sup> Whilst most of the sealing gangs headed off to find more plentiful prey, a small number of sealers remained behind on the islands of the Straits to continue sealing on a domestic scale. Many of these men traded for or captured Tasmanian Aboriginal women, who were brought to the islands and kept there by the sealers. From 1830 onwards there were few women living amongst the mainland Van Diemen's Land clans, due to frequent abductions and murders by white men; some of the sealers then raided the south eastern coast of the Australian mainland, and introduced a few New Hollander women into the community. The black women became integrated into the sealing society, their hunter-gatherer skills being an invaluable asset to the economy, ensuring a relative degree of comfort and prosperity for the sealing community. The numerous progeny of sealers and Aboriginal mothers was a major factor contributing to the continuity of the community which has survived, albeit in a vestigial form, to the present day.<sup>9</sup>

Between October 1830 and October of the following year, Robinson

conducted a "mission to the sealers" with the aim of securing the Aboriginal women for his Establishment. Robinson was an avowed enemy of the sealers, and he recorded the testimony of several Aboriginal sealing women, that certain sealers had cruelly abused them and had kept them in abject slavery since they were very young girls.<sup>10</sup> Prior to Robinson's contact with the sealers, many scurrilous attacks had been directed against the sealers. The sealers were branded en masse as convict bolters, slave traders, pirates, murderers and ships' deserters, and the Government was called upon to rid the straits of their "scourge".<sup>11</sup> Murray-Smith, in his history of the sealing community considers that much of the abuse levelled against the sealers was highly coloured and slanderous in nature, though he concedes that their violent crimes against Aborigines were truly heinous.<sup>12</sup> It would appear that the ire of colonial society was raised not by the sealers' alleged violence against Aborigines, but by the adulterous, polygamous and above all, the miscegenetic nature of unions with the Aboriginal women. Such were the prejudices of the colonial mentality, that European culture was thought to represent the highest echelon of human development, and the Australian Aboriginal cultures the most primitive levels. Van Diemen's Land Aborigines were accorded a status even lower on the scale of civilisation than their mainland counterparts, on a lower plane than any other human culture that had existed for thousands of years.<sup>13</sup> For this reason, miscegenation the mixing of races, was widely condemned by whites, and persons conceived of, or descended from mixed-racial unions, received little social acceptance.<sup>14</sup> There is also evidence that Aborigines, as well as the British, rejected the "half-caste" children in the early colonial era, to the extent where many such children were killed by tribal Aborigines.<sup>15</sup>

The wily sealers were far from willing to part with their concubines and secreted the women on Flinders and other islands, so they should not fall into Robinson's custody. At the outset of the "mission to the sealers", Robinson's Aboriginal Establishment was based on Swan Island, but in search of a more permanent headquarters. Robinson invoked the authority of the Van Diemen's Land Government to evict a village of sealers from Guncarriage Island, though he later discovered the small island did not have the natural resources to support an institution the size of the Establishment, which then numbered more than fifty. Some of the sealing women and children were eventually yielded to Robinson, though the sealers' next move was to send a delegation to Hobart to persuade Arthur that they were honest, god-fearing family men, who genuinely missed their wives and children. As evidence of their favourable moral character, the delegation included one of the "half-caste" children who had been taught to recite the catechism. The sealers' mission achieved its objective. Much to Robinson's chagrin, he was ordered to return some of the wives.<sup>16</sup> In 1836, Robinson made another attempt to destroy the sealing community when, as commandant of the Flinders Island Establishment, he instigated the passing of Parliamentary legislation forbidding the trespass of sealers on the Bass Strait Island,<sup>17</sup> but the sealers had earlier bargained for an amnesty in return for their cooperation with the authorities, and the 1836 Act was never adequately enforced.<sup>18</sup> Three years later, Robinson left the Straits for the Port Phillip Protectorate.

### 3.2.3 The Aboriginal Establishment 1832-1847

The regimented Aboriginal Establishment, which found its headquarters on Flinders Island in 1832, presents a stark contrast to



the wild, anarchic lifestyle of the sealing community. This contrast was recognised by Edward Stephens, a schoolteacher on Cape Barren Island, in the late nineteenth century:

Here we are presented side by side with two systems of settlement, one based on human nature and begun by some of the greatest scoundrels that ever escaped the hangman's gallows - flourishing, contented, happy, comparatively virtuous and existing to this day. The other established by law; guarded by soldiery; blessed by the church; a disgrace to civilization; and perishing in fifteen years from its own inherent defects.<sup>19</sup>

The Establishment was plagued by an inordinately high death rate. Of the 200-odd inmates in 1832, only 47 survived to be transferred to Oyster Cove in 1847. Pulmonary disease was rife in the Flinders Island Establishment, and most of the inmates had lost the will to live. In contrast to the fecundity of the sealing settlements the birthrate of the Establishment declined and by 1837 most of the women had reached or were nearing menopause.<sup>29</sup> Arthur's successor, Sir John Franklin, nevertheless considered the Establishment to have been appropriate - the criterion of his judgement being that the dying people would meet their demise with at least some knowledge of Christianity and "civilisation". Franklin deemed that Robinson's modus operandi should serve as a model for other colonies, and he commended Robinson to the British Colonial Office.<sup>20</sup> Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, was duly impressed, for he not only used Robinson's methods as the basis of his instructions for the establishment of the Port Phillip Protectorate, but appointed Robinson as Chief Protector of Aborigines in the Port Phillip district.<sup>21</sup> After Franklin had openly declared to the British Colonial Office that the extinction of the Van Diemen's Land race was nigh, it thereafter became inconvenient to acknowledge the Aboriginality of the

Bass Strait sealing community, which not only survived but flourished in physical and moral conditions which flouted the accepted norms of colonial society.

### 3.3 The "half-caste" community 1848-1881

By the mid-nineteenth century, the black matriarchs and white patriarchs of the community were ageing, and the business of the community was conducted largely by their offspring, the first generation of the so-called "half-castes" of Bass's Strait. This term later came to be applied to the off-spring of "half-castes", and indeed to persons with any degree of Aboriginal genetic inheritance. Although, as generations passed, distinction was, sometimes drawn between "full" or "true" half-castes, who had one parent of full Aboriginal descent, and the descendants of such persons, who were two or more generations removed from tribal Aborigines. Another argument commonly invoked regarding these people was that they were not true Tasmanian "half-castes" because they were descended from Victorian, and not Tasmanian Aborigines. The later argument has been shown by the genealogical studies already cited to be quite ill-founded, for since by the early twentieth century, nearly all "half-castes" could claim Tasmanian Aboriginal descent, due to the high degree of inter marriage amongst the community.

Most of the reports from this epoch represent the community as living in small settled villages, scattered around Badger, Long, Woody, Little Dog, Clarke's, Tin Kettle, Cape Barren and Green Islands, eking a livelihood from small scale sealing and whaling, hunting kangaroo and other marsupials, selling muttonbird meat, oil and feathers, keeping

livestock, growing vegetables, and trading with passing ships. Many visitors were impressed with the apparent harmony of their society, and by the fact that some of the sealers kept books in their home, and could converse intelligently about them.<sup>23</sup> In 1848, Surveyor-General Power visited the islands, and issued the squatters with occupation licences, thus extending towards the community the first token of official recognition by the Van Diemen's Land Government.<sup>24</sup> Occupation licences were also given to some white farmers, who at that stage were well out-numbered by the "half-castes".

The following year, the "half-castes" were brought to the attention of the Anglican Church when a Reverend Mr Kane encountered a party of men and women at George Town. They had stopped over at George Town after sailing to Launceston to trade fur skins and purchase supplies. Mr Kane found the men "prepossessing in their manners and address, and of athletic frame", and the women "modest in their demeanour", and was gratified to hear that they observed the Lord's day, and that their children had been taught the catechism.<sup>25</sup> An application was thereafter made on their behalf to Lieutenant Governor Denison by Archdeacon Davies in July 1850.<sup>26</sup> In his missionary zeal, Davies misrepresented the community as illiterate heathens in dire need of literacy skills and missionary endeavour, and proposed that their Aboriginality entitled them to the sympathy and generosity of the Government. The Tasmanian Church Chronicle reported that his Excellency replied:

... though fully alive to the destitute religious state of these people and lamenting its effect, he did not feel himself justified in advancing from the Crown revenue aid to people who could not fairly be called aborigines.<sup>27</sup>

Denison's response evinces a paradox that was to become encapsulated in Government policy towards "half-caste" Aborigines for well over a century afterwards. It was assumed, on no other basis than their Aboriginal origin, that the "half-castes" possessed traits commonly associated with Aborigines by prejudiced minds: paganism, atavism, illiteracy, and institutional dependence. And yet, the Tasmanian Government chose to adopt a stipulative definition of an Aboriginal as one of full Aboriginal descent. The arbitrary nature of this definition becomes apparent when one considers that other colonies at the time usually defined persons of mixed Aboriginal and European descent as Aboriginal.<sup>28</sup>

The first ecclesiastical visitor to the Furneaux Islands was Bishop F.R. Nixon, in 1843, followed by a succession of other clergy, including Archdeacon Reibey, Reverend Fereday, Bishop Sandford, Canon Brownrigg, Bishop Bromby, Bishop Montgomery and Bishop Mercer. When Nixon visited Badger Island on his second voyage in 1854 he found Lucy Beadon,<sup>29</sup> daughter of Emmerenna, a Tasmanian Aboriginal, and the sealer Thomas Beadon, teaching several of the sealers' younger children to read and write, and instructing them in the tenets of Christianity.<sup>30</sup> Eight years later, when Archdeacon Reibey sailed to the islands, it was at the invitation of Lucy Beadon, and many parents, who sought the assistance of the Anglican Church to establish an official school.<sup>31</sup> Reports on Reibey's missionary voyages were tabled in Parliament in 1862 and 1863. In the first of these reports, Reibey wrote that he:

found the Islanders an intelligent and interesting people - simple and primitive in their habits, free from the vices of a more civilised life, and very anxious about the instruction of their children. There are 66 children at the present living on the various Islands, and it is a matter of deep importance that

"The Late Miss Lucy Beedon"

Tasmanian Illustrated Supplement, 2 Oct, 1886



steps should be taken without delay, to provide for them the means of instruction, and so endeavour to prevent another generation from growing up in the ignorance of their parents.<sup>32</sup>

Because of the wide dispersal of the community around the Furneaux Islands, the stationing of a teacher to cater for more than 60 children posed a significant problem. Some years earlier, the community had made it known to the Reverend Kane that although they could not afford to pay the teacher's salary themselves, they would willingly ferry him around the islands in their boats.<sup>33</sup> The plan for an itinerant teacher, however, did not meet with Reibey's approbation, and he proposed instead that the teacher reside on a central island, and the children be brought to him as boarders. The parents concurred, and stated their willingness to leave the children in the care of a Master, and to pay board, but immediately balked at Reibey's suggestion that the school should be located on Flinders Island. They had too many unhappy memories of their tribal kin to want anything to do with that Island.<sup>34</sup>

At the urging of Reibey, the Government voted 250 pounds towards the establishment of the school, under the proviso that an equivalent amount be raised by private subscription, but Reibey was successful in eliciting only 80 pounds from his parishioners. Following his return voyage to the Straits, Reibey renewed his campaign for a Government-subsidised catechist/schoolteacher. His argument was based on the principle that the people were owed some recompense for the dispossession of their land, and the near extermination of their black kinfolk. Reibey hoped that the British occupation had entailed no sin, but considered that:

sin will lie heavy at our doors, if we, blessed with civilisation and Christianity, neglect to fulfil to them the simplified duties laid upon us by the requirements of Christian charity.<sup>35</sup>

The Government concurred with these sentiments, and abetted missionary endeavour by contributing towards a missionary vessel and voting further moneys towards a teaching salary and the erection of a schoolhouse.<sup>36</sup> The response of the Government to these sentiments seems to indicate a pervading sense of guilt associated with the expropriation of the Colony and crimes against Aborigines, although this underlying guilt was never adequately addressed. One might assume that to do so could have led the Government to the unfavourable conclusion that some more generous form of compensation should accrue to these people than the extension of missionary services. The authorities were reluctant to act precipitately in providing a school, and Reibey was informed that:

while fully alive to the importance of providing instruction for these people, the Government are not in a position without further reference to Parliament to do more than appoint an individual to the office.<sup>37</sup>

Yet even the appointment of the teacher was deferred. The community however, was not deterred by the procrastination of the authorities, nor the apathy or parsimony of Anglican parishioners. The ever-resourceful Lucy Beadon and the parents were quite capable of taking independent action to provide the children with a teacher. They invited Edwin Richardson, formerly a Church of England schoolteacher from Avenel, Victoria, and his wife, to teach about ten children on Badger Island. This tactic was resorted to in the hope that the Government would see fit to appoint the Richardsons and pay their salary, to which they themselves were contributing.<sup>38</sup> When Reibey returned to the Islands in

1863, he may have been disgruntled that the community had initiated the project without his sanction, for he reported to Parliament that Richardson was unsuited to this position.<sup>39</sup> In spite of Reibey's unfavourable testimonial, the Richardsons received an official posting in May 1864, but did not remain long in that position.<sup>40</sup> In July 1864, Edwin Richardson wrote to Surveyor-General J.E. Calder, suggesting that (east) Kangaroo Island, a small isle off the eastern coast of Flinders Island, would be suited to the construction of a boarding school for fifty pupils. Richardson's application was not supported, as Calder demurred about the suitability of the site as it was considered to contain insufficient water.<sup>41</sup> The response appears to have prompted a resignation from the Richardsons, who soon after left the Straits.

From 1872, the Government pursued a practice of alienating Crown Land on the Straits Islands, and auctioning fourteen year leases "for pastoral purposes only".<sup>42</sup> Successful bidders were almost invariably outsiders, who could afford to out bid the "half-castes". An influx of white settlement began in the Straits, which had ruinous effects on the birding industry. In 1871, Governor Charles Duane met with members of the "half-caste" community, and heard their grievances against the white graziers: that they were being forced off their homes by the leaseholders, and that straying cattle, sheep and other animals were destroying the muttonbird rookeries, which by then were the community's economic mainstay. Du Cane undertook to bring these matters to the attention of the Government, and proudly announced that a schoolteacher/catechist would soon be sent to them.<sup>43</sup> The following year, Chappell Island, and a number of rocks and small isles in the eastern Straits were reserved "to enable Sealers and Muttonbirders to pursue their avocations".<sup>44</sup>



From 1871 until the turn of the century, the Anglican Church and the Tasmanian Government collaborated in a scheme to centralise the community on Cape Barren Island, by providing educational facilities, and other services there. Henry Collis, the next of the missionary schoolteachers was "sent down to the islands in the Straits as a pioneer to collect the half-castes, then widely scattered about, and educate them".<sup>45</sup> This policy of centralising the community to provide education to their children and pastoral supervision for the adults, was expressed twenty years later by Bishop Montgomery, who declared that:

to scatter them over the islands would be to deprive them of education, and no section of our population needs careful teaching, and teaching by a religious man, more than these people...

it is a good policy to keep them where they can for the present be secluded from contact with many of the vices of the Anglo-Saxon.<sup>46</sup>

### 3.4 The Cape Barren Island Reserve 1881-1950

The major Government action which precipitated the centralisation phase was the withdrawal of 6,000 acres of Crown Land on the west of Cape Barren Island for the use of the "half-castes" in 1881.<sup>47</sup> From then, until the end of the century, most, though not all of the community congregated on the Reserve. Throughout the centralisation phase, Church of England ministers continued to act as chief advisors to the Government on the affairs of the community. The effects of the centralisation policy were the increasing surveillance of the physical, moral and social conditions of the community by schoolteachers and missionaries, and by police officers who were brought to the Island, and eventually into the Reserve. By the turn of the

century, a Church had been built by the community with materials supplied by the Anglican Church, the workmanship of which was lauded by Montgomery. A schoolhouse was also built by contract labour from the mainland, and a small dwelling, "Bishopscourt" erected for the use of Montgomery and other visiting dignitaries, and for occasional use by the constable.<sup>48</sup>

Bishop Montgomery became the self-styled father figure to the community from 1891 until the early twentieth century. On his initial contacts with the community, Montgomery, like his predecessors, was impressed by the apparent simplicity, goodwill, and religious devotion of what he considered to be a primitive people, whom he felt should be protected from exploitation and temptation. He even went so far as to recommend land grants to the community:

To me it seems but an act of ordinary justice to be as kindly, as liberal, and as sympathetic as possible with the half-caste population of these islands ... Safeguarded as to their rights, kept from drink, encouraged to become farmers by judicious grants, prevented from inter-marrying too much, these islands should be a happy region famed for its salubrity, and out of reach of the greater temptations.<sup>48</sup>

Montgomery's condescending, but benign attitude towards the community was shortlived, for a decade later, he wrote to Premier Braddon, urging the Government to adopt a strict authoritarian approach towards the people and to relegate them to a status of wardship, which as discussed in Chapter Two, was accorded to most other Aborigines and Aboriginal descendants throughout Australia at the time. Montgomery's scant regard for the Cape Barren Islanders in the latter years of his acquaintanceship with them, is evident from his advice to the Government in 1900:

It is very hard to remember that these people are not English in character - The more you know of them the less English and the more native they are in habits of work. They never can be judged as we should judge ourselves in respect of work and thrift. This means that they must be firmly governed as an inferior race: and that reforms must be made gradually. (The idea of giving them the franchise is at present absurd.)<sup>49</sup>

The basis of Montgomery's recommendation that the "half-castes" should not be entitled to vote was, as he informed the Police Commissioner, that "a bottle of grog could buy any vote".<sup>50</sup>

At least two factors account for the Bishop's change of heart. Montgomery was quick to recognise that the economy of the "half-castes" was jeopardised by straying stock from pastoral holdings, and by over-zealous birding and sealing operations by the community. To protect the birding industry, Montgomery urged the Government to frame regulations which licensed birders, prohibited the staying of stock in reserved rookeries, limited the length of the birding season, prohibited the taking of eggs and junior birds, limited the number of birders per island, and restricted the lighting of fires on birding islands. In 1891, these regulations were gazetted, and Chappell, Babel, Little Green and Forsythe Islands were reserved for birding, whilst in 1894, restrictions were placed upon the sealing industry.<sup>51</sup> The policing of these regulations came to be bitterly resented by certain community members, who were concerned at the escalating supervision of their lifestyles, for they had come to fear that every action of theirs would be construed as a crime.<sup>52</sup> Another factor influencing the deterioration of relations between Montgomery and the community was Montgomery's unmitigated support of his protégé, schoolteacher Edward Stephens, the circumstances of which will be outlined in Chapter Five.

Montgomery and the schoolteachers complained that the concentration of the community in the Reserve in the 1890s had deleterious effects on the moral nature of the community and accused the people of "crimes", such as shooting stray cattle, racing horses on Sunday, vandalism, drinking, allowing diseased dogs to stray, and "immorality".<sup>53</sup> Their solution however, was not to renege on the centralisation policy, but to encourage more vigorous supervision. Relationships between the community and the authorities further degenerated in 1902 when a shipment of sheep was sent to Chappell Island, which had been reserved for birding. In response, the community called a public meeting and subsequently formed a committee to lobby to prevent recurrences of such an action, and to investigate ways of attaining titles to the land on the Reserve, for the community was dissatisfied with the vagueness of their tenure on Cape Barren Island, and felt that they could face summary eviction at any time.<sup>54</sup>

The matters of Reserve management and conditions of tenure on Cape Barren Island were investigated in 1908 by J.E.C. Lord, Commissioner of Police, who subsequently reported to Tasmanian Parliament.<sup>55</sup> The thrust of Lord's report was that the community should be "strictly governed as an inferior race", an echo of the advice of Bishop Montgomery to the Premier of Tasmania in 1900.<sup>56</sup> Lord felt that Cape Barren Island was a "nest of laziness and discontent" and "a curse for want of regulation". To promote the development of the Reserve, Lord proposed that it be subdivided into individual allotments and allocated to persons whose Aboriginality rendered them eligible for licences. He also recommended the prohibition of alcohol on the Reserve, and the penalisation of any white person found guilty of

supplying liquor to a resident. Additionally, he proposed that the debts be settled and residents be rendered incapable of either suing or being sued, and suggested that a Government official be appointed to oversee agricultural practice on the Island, and to manage a depot or agency, in which residents could deposit farm produce and draw out supplies.

Lord's endorsement of racial separatism is evident from his report, for he noted that a few white men had married women residents and were now living on the Reserve. He advised the Government that there should be no further instances of inter-racial marriages on the Reserve, and proposed that if women residents did marry white men, they should forfeit licences to their allotments. Another instance of Lord's apartheid principles is his record that there were three white children living on the Reserve: upon inquiry he was informed that the children had been adopted with the consent of the authorities, and though he noted that the children appeared happy and well cared for, he submitted that the practice was objectionable and should not be allowed to continue.

Four years elapsed before any legislation based on Lord's report was ratified by Parliament. In 1911 the Cape Barren Island schoolteacher Captain James Bladon wrote to the Premier Lewis, offering his services as advisor on Cape Barren affairs. The Premier declined to appoint Bladon in any official capacity, but encouraged him to give the community "such advice and guidance as may be in your power without imposing any responsibility upon the Government".<sup>58</sup> Lewis relied on the genealogical data submitted by Bladon in drawing up schedules of persons

PLATE 2

The Cape Barren Island community, 1911: with Sir Henry Barron (centre) and Captain and Mrs Bladon (left). Source: Beattie Lantern Slides, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



eligible for licences to holdings on the Reserve and asked him to circulate a copy of the Bill to the community. The people dissented, and 70 adults from a community of 160 petitioned Parliament, claiming that homestead blocks should be enlarged, that requirements in the draft Act for the development of agricultural blocks were too severe; that they did not want an overseer, and considered it undesirable for unmarried women and girls to be compelled to take homestead and agricultural blocks.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore they recommended that a lease free of rent should be granted to residents within six months of the issue of a licence. The petitioners proposed that the management of the Reserve could be undertaken by:

a committee appointed amongst ourselves, and that as we are quite capable of managing our own affairs, and know our requirements for the Reserve, and that any regulations we may make be submitted to Parliament and an approval be made lawful.<sup>59</sup>

The Premier was annoyed that the opposition to the Bill would mean the holding over of the legislation until the next session of Parliament, and declared to Bladen: "If there is delay in the settlement of the questions now existing, the half-castes will only have themselves to blame".<sup>60</sup>

In its final form the 1912 Cape Barren Reserve Act contained many, though not all, of Lord's recommendations.<sup>61</sup> The Act charged the Secretary of Lands with the duty of "promoting the welfare and well-being of the residents of the Reserve", and with settling all compensation claims for debts incurred by the community, although it was expected that their debts be repaid at a later date. As recommended by Lord, the consumption of alcohol was prohibited on the Reserve, and

search warrants could be issued against residents suspected of breaching this regulation. Women were granted licences to land, but forfeited them upon marriage to white men. The Act granted licences to homestead blocks and to 50 acre agricultural blocks to persons deemed eligible for them by virtue of their Aboriginal descent. These licences could be converted to 99 year leases subject to improvement of the land. Persons who were not licence-holders were prohibited from entering the area of the Reserve without a permit. The Act also contained a provision for licence-holders to apply for fifty acres of unalienated crown land anywhere in Tasmania, but this was subject to applicants working their licensed allotments for 5 years. This clause provided residents with a mechanism of escape from the segregation restrictions, provided that they were willing to comply with the requirement that they adopt a farming lifestyle. There is some evidence, however, that by the 1930s, few residents of the Reserve knew of this provision, and felt that they were legally prohibited from moving away from the Island.<sup>62</sup>

Although technically the people retained their right to vote under the Reserve Act, attempts were made to disenfranchise them, for in September 1921, Bladon was asked by residents to inform the Government that they were frequently not notified of the date of elections, and that polling booths were located on Flinders Island, making it almost impossible for the Cape Barren Islanders to get there. Furthermore, they had been effectively disenfranchised in municipal elections because the Cape Barren Island ward had been merged with the South Flinders ward in 1908.<sup>63</sup>

The 1912 Cape Barren Island Reserve Act contains many of the repressive elements of Aboriginal legislation elsewhere in Australia, as



described in the previous chapter. Yet, on the positive side the Act can be seen as providing the residents with some measure of land rights, and as such can be considered to be ahead of its time in terms of the development of Aboriginal policy in Australia. It is important to note however, that the community's tenure on the Reserve was not on the basis of inalienable freehold title, but merely occupation licence, which could be cancelled by the Government if holders did not comply with the provisions of the Act. Conversion of licences to leases was also subject to rigid conditions imposed under the Act and many licenses or leases were cancelled for failure to comply with these conditions. There is no evidence to suggest that the Tasmanian Reserve Act was brought to the attention of Aboriginal policy makers in other states, and the Act appears to have had no impact on the evolution of Aboriginal policy elsewhere in Australia.

Subsequent to the 1912 legislation, an abundance of reports advised the Tasmanian Government either of the folly of enacting segregationist legislation in the first place, or of the advisability of more strictly enforcing segregation policy through the appointment of a white overseer.<sup>64</sup> One such series of reports was written by Surveyor-General E.A. Counsel. Using the familiar rhetoric of Aboriginal policy throughout Australia, Counsel claimed that the problems of the settlement could only be rectified by close attention to the "rising generation", and warned that the future of the older people on the Island was very grim indeed;

Under any circumstances very little can be expected from the old people who have lived an idle, careless, and comparatively irresponsible life for many years, except to improve the moral and insanitary conditions under which they have existed; but there is hope of reclaiming the young people, and that appears to be a duty of the state.<sup>65</sup>

Counsel's initial plan for the Cape Barren youth was to separate them from their parents, and educate them in a boarding school on the mainland of Tasmania, but after consultation with the Parliamentary Draftsman, found that such an action would be contrary to common law, if it were against the wishes of the parents. Counsel expressed his disappointment at the advice, and formulated a more legally acceptable plan to deal with the problem, as he perceived it. His alternative strategy displays admixture of segregationist and assimilationist principles, in keeping with the notion of "tuition for citizenship" explained in Chapter Two. Counsel recommended that the ultimate dispersal of the community could be achieved if a white supervisor were appointed to watch over the community. The supervisor would:

devote the whole of his endeavours to ameliorate the condition of these people, by a careful and constant supervision of their daily life and habits, teaching their daily life and habits, teaching and giving useful instruction to the young people, in general employment making for good citizenship.<sup>66</sup>

Counsel felt certain that the appointment of a supervisor would induce the population of the Reserve to leave the Island to escape the disciplinary restraints that would be imposed upon them, and that they would thereafter assimilate into the white population of Tasmania.

The main criticism of the Cape Barren Islanders contained in the body of reports written subsequent to the 1912 Act was that they should be forced to practice agriculture. As Constable Mansfield put it in 1922, "they require a strong, strict yet fair man who is capable of learning them Agricultural and Pastoral pursuits".<sup>67</sup> Such reports failed to take cognisance of the fact that for generations the economy of the community had been based on hunting and trading the products of

muttonbirds, seals and marsupials, rather than on subsistence farming. None of the writers of such reports questioned why the community should reject the economic and cultural norms of Anglo-Australian culture, which favoured steady, year round labour over seasonal employment, or to recognise that the people did not have the money, or the skills to successfully farm an isolated island with relatively low rainfall and little running water.

In November 1922 the community became alarmed at a report in a mainland newspaper, that the Whitemark Council, had been lobbying the Government to implement Mansfield's recommendation, and appoint an overseer for the Reserve. The community set out its points of disagreement with the Reserve Act in a letter to the paper signed by 68 adult residents. They requested that the 1912 Act be set aside, in favour of one freehold title, declaring that:

we will not submit to an overseer or a Commissioner for we are free borne British subjects and want to be treated likewise. We do not want to be an expense nor a drage on the Gov. in any way but to be placed on a workable footing as other citizens of the stat.

That we be granted a deed for our Land instead of "ninety nine" years lease after the boundry fence as been completed and all moneys repaid to Goverment as advanced for Wire Stock etc. etc.

Also 50 Acres of Land be granted to Married Women for the reason that 50 acres for a Family is not sufficiant and this Land only being suitable for a grazing propersition...

We do not want to be tied up in (a) Government Debts, but are willing to pay rates and Taxes for the purpose of roads etc.

We are tired and disheartened not through owing big debts, but for having nothing to show of what we are improving the Land for as you will notice this ground is only held as a Lease and may be cancelled at any time and by granting us a deed will give us the encouragement to make our land self supporting

It is the presant Bill of 1912 of this that is inflicting hardships on us and bringing up to this Present position.

Despite the crudeness of its presentation, the Islanders' astuteness and high level of political awareness, evidenced by the petition, might have come as somewhat of a shock to any Government officials who viewed the community as so powerless that they required a white manager to protect their interests. The crux of the matter appears to be that those who lobbied for a white supervisor did so because they felt the "half-castes" should be forced to cultivate the blocks in return for the Government's supposedly generous action in allocating the holdings to them under the 1912 Act.

In 1924 the State Government set up a Select Committee to inquire into matters associated with Tasmanian "half-castes". The major issues of concern in the 1920s were poverty, high unemployment, a lack of involvement in agriculture, and the community's hopeless indebtedness to local storekeepers (about 3,000 pounds in 1922) and the insecure state of the birding industry. Due to the indemnity granted under the 1912 Act, creditors were unable to recover this amount, but refused to further supply goods on credit, the result being a very precarious subsistence for the community.<sup>70</sup> The Committee's report deemed that the problems of the Reserve could be rectified by more adequate supervision, and supported the notion of appointing a white supervisor.<sup>71</sup> Despite strong local antagonism to the idea, a few agricultural or public works supervisors were appointed by the Lands Department during the Reserve period.<sup>72</sup>

The next comprehensive advisory report on Island affairs was submitted to the State Government by A.W. Burbury, of the Attorney-General's Department.<sup>71</sup> Burbury's report displays a greater

degree of insight into Reserve policy and its effects than his contemporaries. Burbury witnessed poverty and malnourishment on the settlement, and noted that this was due, to a large part, to exploitation by whites in the birding industry. He noted some equivocation in the Government's dealings with the community when he wrote that the residents' interpretation of the Act meant that they were now "buoyed up by the implication that they were to be cared for by the Government". Burbury recognised some merit in this interpretation, and questioned why the Act had been passed in the first place, if it were not a recognition that the people were entitled to some compensation for the dispossession of their ancestors. He also perceived that after the passing of the 1912 Act, the Tasmanian Government had been anxious to avoid assuming full responsibility for the legislation, and had hitherto declined to strictly enforce its segregationist character by employing an overseer, for the appointment would be tantamount to an admission that Aborigines existed in the State. The Government's dilemma was encapsulated in the observation that: "It is evident that too much or too little has been done".<sup>74</sup> The ambivalence of the Reserve Act is evidenced from two very diverse interpretations placed upon the legislation by the Cape Barren Island community, and by white authorities and their would-be advisors. The community apparently considered the allocation of the 6,000 acres to be a form of compensation for the British invasion, and felt that the land was theirs to cultivate, or to lie fallow as they pleased, whilst numerous white advisors to the Government stressed the segregationist aspects of the legislation and urged their enforcement.

The upshot of Burbury's report was that the Tasmanian Government, upon Burbury's suggestion, invited "a respectable mission

organisation" to investigate the conditions of the settlement, with a view to taking it over as a Mission. In December 1930, three officials from the Anglican Church's national mission organisation, the Australian Board of Missions (ABM), visited the Island. The ABM reports<sup>75</sup> represent the same confusion between assimilationist and segregationist principles evident in the earlier reports by Counsel. The mission officials held no high opinion of the people, and were aghast when one man declared to them that:

if a case were brought in a Federal Court the Tasmanian Government would be forced to pay the half-castes rent for the island of Tasmania.<sup>76</sup>

The claim for landrights and compensation made by the Cape Barren Islander in 1930 is yet another instance of the high degree of political astuteness that had developed amongst the community, for the man's statement is as modern as the demands of political activists of the 1980s, and ABM Secretary, J.S. Needham's reaction to the claim is equally reminiscent of the white backlash to the granting of any rights or concessions to Aborigines today. The missionaries took umbrage, not only at the sentiments expressed, but at the fact that they could detect no trace of Aboriginal ancestry in the man's appearance, a charge which has been commonly levelled against Tasmanian Aborigines ever since. The stance of Needham and his colleagues on the rights of the Cape Barren Islanders appears ironic, when one considers that Tasmanian Anglican missionaries of the nineteenth century had consistently maintained that white Tasmanians owed a great debt to the "half-castes" as recompense for the actions of early colonists. The verdict of the ABM was that the Cape Barren Islanders were more white than black, but that they

nevertheless had inherited some severe defects of character from their Aboriginal forebears which could only be corrected by placing them under strict supervision before eventually "turning them loose" on mainland Tasmania to become assimilated into the Tasmanian population. The Board considered that the enactment of segregation in the first place had been a mistake, and advised the Government to adopt an assimilation policy because:

after such a long spell of irresponsible independence [the residents] would not be amenable to proper discipline.<sup>77</sup>

After the ABM refused to take over the administration of the Reserve, the Government remained solicitous about methods of dealing with the community, for in 1935, the Secretary of Lands wrote to the Protectors of Aborigines in other States, informing them that "Here in Tasmania we are faced with what is known as a 'Half-caste problem'".<sup>78</sup> The Secretary for Lands did not elucidate what was meant by the "Half Caste problem", though one might assume that the persistent lobbying by the community could have constituted at least part of the problem. The Protectors in other states were asked for information regarding Aboriginal policy, particularly in relation to missionary supervision. Yet at the time of the Secretary for Lands' letter to Protectors in other states, Cape Barren Island did, in fact have a resident missionary. In 1934, Miss Ada Hudson was granted permission to establish a non-denominational mission on the Island, the "Bethel Peniel" mission, which she operated until the early 1960s. Her perceptions of missionary duties brought her into conflict with teachers, visiting Anglican clerics, and, after the bush nursing service began on the Island in 1939 with registered nurses, for the professional

staff often resented the intrusion of an untrained voluntary worker into their domain.

After establishing herself on the Reserve, Miss Hudson began to publicise the conditions of poverty there, and raised a statewide appeal for charity. She wrote to the Tasmanian Press, informing the public that:

If the future is to hold anything for the rising generation, we must provide better facilities to administer to their physical, mental and spiritual needs.<sup>79</sup>

Miss Hudson's appeal met with opposition from many of the Island residents, who wrote to the Press claiming that they did not require charity, but work. Furthermore they rejected a plan by Miss Hudson to build a Mission Hall in which she intended to give the young "an education along lines which would give them confidence, self-reliance, and an earning capacity in later years".<sup>80</sup> The replies by the residents, printed in The Examiner, show a marked degree of insight. The signatories to the letters claimed that they were well satisfied with existing arrangements for the education of the children at the State School, and warned that if Miss Hudson thought the children would be coming to her after school for a second dose of gardening and sewing, she was very much mistaken. The Cape Barren Islanders also informed the Tasmanian public that they were unwilling to accept gifts of second-hand clothes because of the risk of transmitted disease from epidemics which were prevalent on the mainland,<sup>81</sup> again showing evidence of commonsense and good political judgement, not to mention some insight into child psychology.



Miss Hudson was successful in her project of erecting a Hall, though far from delighted with the conditions imposed on its operation. After she approached the Tasmanian Government to make a substantial contribution towards the Hall to supplement donations, the Secretary for Lands, Major T.H. Davies, agreed to do so, provided the Government held the responsibility for its management. The missionary was told that she would have access to the building, but should not conduct religious services which would conflict with those held by the Anglican Church, and should restrict her teaching activities to teaching domestic work to children over school age.<sup>82</sup> Miss Hudson had earlier opposed the notion of a Public Hall which could be used for dances and social occasions, and petitioned the Minister for Lands on the subject. Her letter gives a clear indication of the character and values of its writer, and her patronising, but nonetheless sympathetic view of the community:

I am not a 'kill joy', but am endeavouring to give them as much clean 'fun' as possible. I want to raise their morals but Dancing which they go mad over, is not going to help them either morally or physically. They have so much consumption in their poor bodies, that the over-heating of them, and going out into Cold is only likely to hasten the trouble.<sup>83</sup>

Davies, however, obviously felt that the people concerned, and not the missionary, should judge whether they were well enough for dancing. The ultimate pathos of Miss Hudson's situation is that after her retirement, she was cared for in Hobart by John Thomas, an ex-Cape Barrener, and his wife, Marie, before her death in the late 1960s.<sup>84</sup>

In 1937, the people of Cape Barren Island pressed their case for justice and fair treatment to the Tasmanian Parliament. They found a spokesman on their behalf in Government, a Mr Ockerby, MHA. Ockerby

informed Parliament that the Cape Barren Islanders were being treated as the Jews in Germany and placed a petition before the House of Assembly. The petition, signed by 59 residents of Cape Barren Island, requested the right to travel at their own expense to any part of Tasmania, and "not be continually pushed back by the authorities on Cape Barren Island". The petitioners declared that:

We, being free-born, law-abiding British subjects, having the right to vote at Parliamentary elections, and having British blood in our veins, are not receiving the treatment accorded to our white brethren.<sup>86</sup>

The petition also drew attention to the fact that community members were receiving only about half the unemployment benefits granted to Tasmanians of British blood, and for six years after the introduction of unemployment relief schemes (in 1929), they had received no financial allowances whatsoever. In response, the Opposition view was that rather than being deprived, the community was being "pampered", and bemoaned the fact that the Cape Barren Islanders were getting into the habit of going to the Government for the smallest grievance. A spokesman for the Government declared that the people were extremely well cared for by a solicitous Government, since they did not have to pay rates and taxes. Ockerby declined to pursue the case further, after he was forced to admit that he had not read the Cape Barren Island Reserve Act.

Chapter Two has pointed out that in 1937, assimilation was declared the new Federal Government policy. Support for the revocation of segregation began to gain impetus in Tasmania as early as 1932 Chief Secretary (Hon. C.E. Jones) heralded the new policy by stating that he favoured dispersal of the community since the people were not "true

half-castes" at all, and because: "concentration there was gradually lowering the standard of the half-castes through interbreeding and other reasons". In response to this suggestion, a delegate from the Australian Women's National League voiced the popular prejudice and xenophobia that was to prove one of the stumbling blocks to the implementation of the assimilation policy in Tasmania, and indeed throughout Australia:

Mrs McNair: They are not capable of doing any work. They are too lazy, and are not trained. It would be a dreadful thing if they were brought to Tasmania.<sup>87</sup>

Aside from reluctance of white Tasmanians to accept the Cape Barren Islanders on an equal footing the twin impediment to assimilation was the reluctance of the Cape Barreners, like many of their Australian counterparts, to relinquish their community affiliations and traditional links with the past.

Ironically enough, the Depression of the 1930s seems to have brought a slight improvement to the foundering economy of the Reserve, with the introduction of pensions and unemployment relief, and work for sustenance schemes.<sup>88</sup> In 1941, the World War II labour shortage prompted the Tasmanian Government to develop a scheme to employ Furneaux Island "half-castes" on farms on the Tasmanian mainland, under the "protection" of police and agricultural officers. The rhetoric of the rising tide of assimilationist theory was invoked to justify the scheme: the "half-castes" would contribute to the war effort and engage in productive labour which should transform them into "a national asset instead of a liability".<sup>89</sup> Of the 24 able bodied men on Cape Barren Island who had not already enlisted in the Services, 16 were prepared to accept the employment offer.<sup>90</sup>

It was not until 1945 that the 1912 Cape Barren Island Reserve Act was actually revised to accord with the shift in Federal policy from segregation to assimilation. The 1945 Act was in keeping with contemporaneous notions of tuition for citizenship, for it retained the segregationist character of the original Act, though it reduced the community's tenure from 99 to 5 year leases.<sup>91</sup> Three years after the enactment of the 1945 legislation, an Inquiry was held into conditions on the Furneaux Islands by a Joint Committee of the House of Assembly and Legislative Council.<sup>92</sup> This report recommended that the Reserve should be closed, that assimilation policy be adopted, and no further legislation enacted. Nonetheless the Committee conceded that it would not be politically expedient to close the Reserve too abruptly, and advised that residents should be granted a transition period, during which the future needs of the children should be looked to especially. It was noted that although many people considered that the Bethel mission had outlived its usefulness, the mission should continue to be maintained in the near future.

Although the Cape Barren Island Reserve Acts (1912) and (1945) display affinities with the segregationist laws in other States, the Tasmanian Government's dealings with the community represent what is probably a softer form of protectionism than occurred in other states. The reasons for this appear to be ideologically based: the Tasmanian Government, while recognising the community as "half castes" and not Aborigines, had been reluctant to enforce segregation policy too strictly, for this would amount to a public declaration that there were Aborigines in the State, and such an admission was not in the material interests of the Tasmanian Government and white Tasmanians at large.

When assimilation finally became an accepted national policy, the Tasmanian Government acted more quickly and perhaps more ruthlessly than other states to abolish segregation. In the words of C.M. Pitt, Minister for Lands, the time had come for the Islanders to be "turned loose" and made to "mix and work with whites".<sup>93</sup>

### 3.5 Assimilation (1950-1975)

From November 28, 1950 until the mid-1970s, the Tasmanian Government operated its assimilation policy, the major objective of which was the eviction of the people from the Island and their repatriation on the mainland of Tasmania, for it was hoped that the dispersal of the enclave would automatically lead to the people's ultimate disappearance within the general Tasmanian population. A large part of the community did emigrate, although overpopulation appears to have been chiefly responsible for the exodus. In 1953, the anthropologist, N.B. Tindale recorded that there had been a rapid increase in population from 1939 onwards, which was coincident with a decline in living standards, and he reflected that these factors had "introduced grave uncertainties into future prospects for the development of the islanders". Tindale noted that although migration had not hitherto been encouraged by the Government, it had nevertheless been occurring for some time, and had accelerated in the decade 1939-1949. Tindale's projection for the future was that:

The shift seems inevitable for the population continues to grow without any more living space being available on the Bass Strait islands.<sup>94</sup>

Ill health, malnourishment and poverty continued to characterise the Island settlement during the 1960s. This was partly due to the

Tasmanian Government strategies of withholding assistance from intransigent residents, who refused to leave the Island. By 1970, roads and the airstrip on the Island had degenerated, and the hospital closed, leaving no-one on Cape Barren with medical training. The Island postmaster, community member, Ron Thomas, informed a Mercury reporter:

No-one is going to run us off our island. We are going to stay and make a go of it, not be shifted to some sort of slums in Tasmania... We believe we should have as good a medical service as any other Tasmanians. Flinders Island has a free medical service and a resident doctor.<sup>95</sup>

Tactics used by the Government to expatriate the Islanders were the lure of assisted housing and employment on the Island, and the withholding of social service benefits from persons who refused to leave. In 1969, a rumour was reported in the Press that plans were in train to take over Cape Barren as a military training ground for Defence Services.<sup>96</sup> In the early 1970s, Commonwealth Funds were allocated for the position of "re-settlement officer, whose duties were to include overseeing the eviction of the remaining residents from Cape Barren Island. After some pressure from Abschol, the position was re-named "Community Advisor", and a non-Aboriginal Mr D. Napier, to the position. In 1973 another outsider, Mr K.G. Brooks, was appointed advisor to the Government on Cape Barren affairs.<sup>97</sup>

Several Cape Barreners who yielded to economic pressures to leave and the promise of mainland homes and employment, found that houses offered to them by the Government were substandard, and that they were frequent victims of racism in the employment process, since their colour or surname signified to would-be employers, a Tasmanian Aboriginal origin.<sup>97</sup> In 1965, the Tasmanian Government sent its first

delegate, Chief Secretary B.K. Miller to one of the biennial national conferences of Ministers for Aboriginal affairs.<sup>98</sup> Three years later, Federal funding was received for Aborigines in Tasmania, the State's official position was that there were no Aborigines in Tasmania, although the Cape Barren Islanders could be regarded as "within the scope of the fund".<sup>99</sup>

The Tasmanian branch of Abschol, a national organisation formed in Australian Universities to assist Aborigines to improve their education and quality of life, took up the Islanders' cause in 1969 and circulated a petition on Cape Barren denouncing the assimilation policy and the Tasmanian Government's unwillingness to listen to the wishes of the residents, and affirming the people's desire to remain on the Island. The petition was signed by nearly the entire population of residual residents.<sup>100</sup>

At a meeting between Abschol representatives and the Premier of Tasmania, Premier Angus Bethune was asked to clarify his stance in relation to the Cape Barren people. Bethune is reported to have made the following statements:

What we would like to do as a Government is to absorb them (the islanders) into the community. We have no sympathy with people who don't pay their way, and we would like to get them off the island ...

We don't want to encourage the birding industry because it is perpetuating the trouble we've got with these people.

We treat them as ordinary Tasmanians

There are some people who are unemployable and unhouseable. Ordinary houses are too good for such people.<sup>101</sup>

The irony of the Tasmanian situation of the late 1960s and early 1970s is that, whilst the Government was vigorously pursuing an assimilation

policy, it refused to acknowledge that the objects of such a policy were Aboriginal. In 1971, Bill Mollison wrote to the Chief Parliamentary Draftsman, requesting clarification on the official Tasmanian definition of an Aboriginal. The verbal response was that a definition of an Aboriginal in Tasmania would be "an amusing proposition". Mollison then pointed out that if the State had no such legal definition of an Aboriginal, the Government had been fraudulently disbursing moneys ear-marked for Aborigines, to persons with no legal entitlement to it.<sup>102</sup> The first public affirmation that Tasmanian Aboriginal descendants considered themselves to be Aborigines came at a conference convened by Abschol in the Launceston Trades Hall in 1971,<sup>103</sup> which about 180 Aborigines attended. Funding for the conference had been refused by the State Government, although it was attended by some Commonwealth Government officials.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.6 Recent Policy (1976-1986)

In 1976, to honour the centenary of the death of Truganini, the Tasmanian Government released her remains, formerly held at the Tasmanian Museum, and permitted cremation. Her ashes were scattered over D'Entrecasteaux Channel, near her homeland on Bruny Island, by Tasmanian Aborigines.<sup>106</sup> This symbolic action marks a turning point in the official recognition of Aboriginal descendants as Aborigines, although public acceptance of Aboriginal identity in Tasmania still remains a contentious issue in the mid 1980s. Over the past decade since Truganini's cremation, State Government Aboriginal policy may, perhaps be interpreted as integration, but in terms of Tatz and Chambers' definition that the policy "allows, or even purports to



encourage, the retention of some aspects of Aboriginal culture, whilst still expecting that Aborigines will accommodate to white models of behaviour. 107

Since the mid-1970s, the harsher assimilation strategies have been relinquished, and a more lenient approach adopted towards the Island community. The people are presently permitted to stay on the Island, and some financial assistance, mostly from Federal government sources, has made life more viable on Cape Barren Island in recent years, though it appears that a subtle pressure to eventually assimilate into white society still exists. The present Tasmanian Government's position was articulated by Premier Robin Gray, in 1935: all Tasmanians would be treated equally, and no racial or ethnic group would be given special preference. Land rights would not be awarded to Tasmanian Aborigines because:

Tasmania and the land it constitutes belongs to all Tasmanians.<sup>108</sup>

In summary, it can be seen that Tasmanian Government policies towards Aborigines and their descendants have undergone marked changes during the two centuries since British occupation of Australia, and that such policies have had a high coincidence with national trends in Aboriginal policy, despite a well entrenched intellectual resistance amongst Anglo-Tasmanians to the notion of a surviving Aboriginal society in the State. Furneaux Island Aborigines of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have been far from passive recipients of such policies, but have frequently engaged in political processes to effect changes in existing policies. Part Two of the study focuses on the

educational provisions proffered to Furneaux Island Aborigines during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and an assessment is then made of the degree to which race-relations policies or accepted notions about Aborigines have impinged on educational processes and on teacher/community relationships on Cape Barren Island.

## NOTES

1. Lord Hobart to Collins, D., 7 February, 1803, HRA series I, vol. IV, pp.12-13.

These instructions pertained to the district of Port Phillip, and were issued a year before Collins was transferred to Van Diemen's Land. It appears that neither Collins, nor other Van Diemens Land governors, were given specific instructions regarding Van Diemen's Land Aborigines, though they would, without doubt, have been aware of the official British policy.

2. For example:

Collins, D. to Lord Hobart, 10 November, 1804, HRA series III, vol. I, p.286.

Collins, D. to Governor King, 28 September, 1805, Ibid., p.327.

Collins, D. to Governor King, 18 October, 1806, Ibid., p.380.

3. A few extant accounts of the Risdon massacre are presented in:

Turnbull, C., 1974: Black War: the Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines, 3rd edition, Sun Books, Melbourne, pp.30-35.

Upon the death of Collins, many official records of the slaughter were destroyed by soldiers involved.

4. Van Diemen's Land became Tasmania in 1856.
5. Turnbull, C., 1974: op.cit. p.3.
6. Ibid, pp.30-123.
7. Plomley, N.J.B. (ed.), 1966: Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834. Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Hobart.
8. Whinray, J.S., 1972 (draft): 'Land use and change at Clarkes' Island, Bass Strait', typescript, Flinders Island.

9. Some of the major references tracing the development of the community are:

Tindale, N.B., 1953: "Growth of a People: formation and development of a hybrid Aboriginal and white stock on the Islands of Bass Strait, Tasmania 1815-1949", Records of the Queen Victoria Museum, New Series 2, pp.1-64, 1 June.

Murray-Smith, S., 1973: "Beyond the Pale: The Islander community of Bass Strait in the Nineteenth Century, Papers and Proceedings, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, vol. 20, no. 4, pp.167-200.

Mollison, B. (ed.), 1976: The Tasmanian Aborigines and their descendants, Psychology Department, Occasional Paper, University of Tasmania, Hobart.

Ryan, L., 1982: The Aboriginal Tasmanians, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia.

10. Plomley, N.J.B., 1966: op.cit., p.249, 256.

11. Various accounts of the "Runaways of the Straits" are surveyed in:

Cumpston, J.S., 1970: Kangaroo Island 1800-1836, Roebuck Books, Canberra, pp.76-86.

Fowler, R.M., 1980: The Furneaux Group Vol. I, Roebuck Books, Canberra, pp.198-209.

12. Murray-Smith, S., 1973: op.cit., p.171.

13. For example:

Howitt, A.W., 1904: The Native Tribes of South Eastern Australia, Macmillan, London, p.8.

Thomas, N.W., 1906: Natives of Australia, Constable, London, p.18.

14. Such was the ignorance concerning the effects of miscegenation, that Count Paul de Strzlecki, a nineteenth century natural historian, posited that miscegenation, rather than murder and introduced disease, accounted for the near extinction of the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines. He theorised that once an Aboriginal woman had conceived a child to a man of the (supposedly superior) white race, she was thereafter rendered incapable of conceiving a child of Aboriginal paternity (de Strzlecki, P.E., 1845: Physical description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, Longman, London, p.346).

15. Plomley, N.J.B., op.cit., p.300.

16. Plomley, N.J.B., 1966: op.cit., pp.242-480.

17. An Act to confer on the Commandant of Flinders Island the Powers of a Justice of the Peace and to provide for the Removal of Persons trespassing on any of the Islands in Bass's Straits, 1836, William IV, no. 15, Tasmania.
18. Plomley, N.J.B., 1966: op.cit., p.459.
19. Stephens, E., 1899: The Furneaux Islands, manuscript, Royal Society of Tasmania Archives, RS 40/3, p.12.
20. Franklin, J. to Lord Glenelg, 3 August, 1837: Colonies Australia, vol. 5, British Parliamentary Papers, p.376.
21. Lord Glenelg to Gipps, G., 31 January, 1838: Colonies Australia, vol. 5, British Parliamentary Papers, p.374.
22. See, for example:  

"Furneaux Islands Important Meeting: The Islanders' Reserve", Examiner, 27 August, 1902, p.2.

Lord, J.E.C., 1908: "Report upon the State of the Islands, the Condition and Mode of Living of the Half-Castes, the existing Methods of Regulating the Reserve and suggesting Laws for Future Administration", Tasmania, Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol. LIX, no. 57, pp.7-8.
23. Some reports from this era are:  

Power, R., 1849: Report on the Islands in Banks' Straits, AOT CSO 24/66/251, pp.130-150.

Power, R., 1854: Report upon the islands in the Eastern and Western Straits, North West Coast and King Island, AOT LSD 1/51, pp.369-438.

Nixon, F.R., 1857: Cruise of the Beacon, Bell and Daldy, London, pp.36-55.

Reibey, T., 1862: "Letter from the Venerable Archdeacon Reibey, on the subject of the Half-Caste Islanders in the Straits", Tasmania Legislative Council Journals, vol. VII, no. 17.

Reibey, T., 1863: "Half-caste Islanders in Bass's Straits", Tasmania, Legislative Council Journals, vol. IX, no. 48.
24. Power, R., 1849: op.cit., p.150.
25. "Tasmanian Missions", Tasmanian Church Chronicle, 6 March, 1852 (2nd page).
26. Archdeacon Davies to Governor Denison, 22 July, 1850: AOT CSO 24/167/4898.
27. Tasmanian Church Chronicle, 1852: op.cit.
28. Elkin, A.P., 1944: op.cit., pp.81-90.

29. Alternative spellings of "Beadon" are "Beedon" and "Beeton". Today, the clan is known as "Beeton".
30. Nixon, F.R., 1857: op.cit., pp.40-41.
31. Reibey, T., 1863: op.cit., p.5.
32. Reibey, T., 1862: op.cit., p.3.
33. Tasmanian Church Chronicle, 1852: op.cit.
34. Reibey, T., 1862: op.cit., p.3.
35. Reibey, T., 1863: op.cit., p.6.
36. Reibey, T. to Colonial Secretary, 9 January, 1867: AOT CSD 4/29/313. The remainder of this file contains further details of negotiations for the school in the 1860s.
37. Colonial Secretary to Reibey, T., 10 May, 1863: AOT LSD 1/111, pp.280-281.
38. Colonial Secretary to Reverend Fereday, 21 November, 1863: AOT CSD 4/29/313.
39. Reibey, T., 1863: op.cit., p.5. Reibey had earlier favoured another man for the appointment (Reibey, T., 1862, op.cit. p.4).
40. The Board of Education appointed the Richardsons in May 1864 on a combined salary of 75 pounds per annum (AUD 4/6/246). By the following year, the school had closed for want of teachers. (Board of Education, 1864: Reports 1845-85, p.6.) No mention is made of the Furneaux Group school in the Board's annual report for 1865.
41. Richardson, E. to Calder, J.E., 1 July, 1864: AOT LSD 1/61, pp.214-215, and annotated response to letter.
42. Hobart Town Gazette, 22 October, 1872: vol. LVII, No. 4896, p.1480;  
     7 January, 1873, vol. LVII, No. 4910, p.5;  
     21 September, 1875, vol. LX, No. 5068, p.843;  
     2 January, 1877, vol. LXII, No. 5145, p.75;  
     26 February, 1878, vol. LXIII, No. 5215, p.391;  
     21 January, 1879, vol. LXIV, No. 5265, p.177;  
     22 February, 1881, vol. LXVI, No. 5390, p.249
43. Ducane, C., Memorandum for Ministers, 14 August, 1871: AOT CSD 7/45/833.
44. Hobart Town Gazette, 9 July, 1872, vol. LVII, No. 4878, p.1060.

45. "In Memoriam: Mr Henry Collis", Church News, July, 1895, p.563.
46. "A trip to the Furneaux Islands VII", Church News, December, 1891, p.563.
47. Hobart Town Gazette, 15 February, 1881, vol. LXVI, No. 5389, p.246.
48. References to erection of buildings on the Reserve:

Church:

"My Second Visitation of the Furneaux Islands", Church News, April 1892, p.630.

"The Bishop's Address to the Synod", Church News, June, 1893, p.851.

School:

See note 45, 2 May, 1892, AOT ED 56, p.19.

"Bishopscourt":

Rule, J. to Montgomery, H.H., 28 September, 1898, AOT ED 13/69, p.7.

49. Montgomery, H.H. to Premier Braddon, 17 September, 1900: Letterbook AOT NS 373/74, p.342.
  50. Montgomery, H.H. to Richardson, G., 5 June, 1899: Letterbook op.cit., p.191.
- Montgomery, H.H. to Richardson, G., 26 August, 1899, AOT NS 373/214/47.
- Hobart Town Gazette, 15 December, 1891, vol. LXXVII, no. 6063, p.2449;  
16 October, 1894, vol. LXXXII, no. 6239, p.1992.
52. Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 8 November, 1900, AOT NS 373/214/47, Ibid, 15 October, 1900.
  53. Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 28 November, 1899, 23 November, 1900: AOT NS 373/214/47.
- Montgomery, H.H. to Braddon, E., 26 August, 1899, AOT NS 373/214/47.
54. Examiner, 27 August, 1902: op.cit.
  55. Lord, J.E.C., 1908: "Furneaux Islands: Report upon the State of the Islands, the Condition and Mode of Living of Half-Castes, the Existing Methods of Regulating the Reserve, and suggesting lines for Future Administration", Tasmania, Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol. LIX, no. 57.
  56. Montgomery, H.H. to Premier Braddon, 17 September, 1900: Letterbook, op.cit.

57. Bladon, J.M. to Premier Lewis, N.E., 23 January, 1911,  
Lewis, N.E. to Bladon, J.M., 7 February, 1911,  
Royal Society of Tasmania University Archives, University of Tasmania,  
RS 40/1.
58. The basis of this objection appears to have been a fear that if  
unmarried women had property, outsiders would be encouraged to marry  
in to the community and take over.
59. Cape Barren Island Residents to Mr Howroyd, MHA, 21 November, 1911,  
Royal Society of Tasmania Archives, RS 40/1.
60. Lewis, N.E. to Bladon, J.M., 4 December, 1911, Royal Society of  
Tasmanian Archives, RS 40/1.
61. An Act to provide for the Subdivision of the Cape Barren Island  
Reserve, and for other purposes. 1912, George V, no. 16.
62. "Petition by Island Residents". Advocate, 21 December, 1937, p.6.
63. Bladon, J.M. to Lewis, N.E., 15 September, 1921: Royal Society of  
Tasmania Archives, RS 40/1.  
  
Lord, J.E.C., 1908; op.cit., p.5.
64. Counsel, E.A. to Minister for Lands, 25 October, 1922, 4 December,  
1922, 12 July, 1924: AOT LSD 1/576.
65. Counsel, E.A., 4 December, 1922: op.cit. p.1.
66. Ibid, p.2.
67. Mansfield, W.J. to Secretary for Lands, 18 September, 1922: AOT LSD  
1/576.
68. "Flinders Island Council", Examiner, 16 November, 1922, p.10.
69. Cape Barren Island Residents to Guy, J.A., 22 November, 1922: AOT LSD  
1/576.
70. Mansfield, W.J., 1922: op.cit.
71. Select Committee, 1924: "Report to inquire into and report upon the  
best means of dealing with the half-caste problem on the Furneaux  
Group of Islands", Tasmania, Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol.  
XCI, no. 48.



72. Davies, T.H., Memorandum, 6 November, 1936, AOT LSD 51.  
Davies, T.H. to Maynard, B.R., 1 February, 1940: AOT LSD 51.  
Pender-Brookes, O. to Secretary for Education, 30 March, 1949:  
AOT ED 156/1/1, (correspondence 1949).
73. Burbury, A.W., 1929: Report on the conditions of the Half-Castes at Cape Barren Island Reservation, AOT LSD 1/576.
74. Ibid, p.7.
75. Needham, J.S. to Attorney-General, 24 December, 1930: AOT LSD 1/576.  
Australian Board of Missions, 1931: "Cape Barren Island", ABM Review, January 15, pp.171-172.
76. Australian Board of Missions, 1931: op.cit, p.171.
77. Needham, J.S. to Attorney General, 24 December, 1930, op.cit. p.2.
78. Secretary for Lands to Protectors of Aborigines, Adelaide, Brisbane, Northern Territory, 12 April, 1935, AOT LSD 1/576.
79. "Mission Work at Cape Barren", Examiner, 4 August, 1936, p.10.
80. Ibid.
81. Everett, J.C., 1936: "Cape Barren Appeal", Examiner, 28 August, p.13.  
Residents, 1936: "Cape Barren Island", Examiner, 19 September, p.9.
82. Secretary for Lands to Minister for Lands, 14 August, 1936,  
AOT LSD 1/576.
83. Hudson, A.M. to Davies, T.H., 16 December, 1934, AOT LSD 1/576.
84. Thomas, M. to researcher, personal communication, Hobart, 30 September, 1986.
85. "Children of the same God", Mercury, 17 November, 1937, p.7.
86. Advocate, 21 December, 1937: op.cit.
87. "Half-Caste Settlement", Mercury, 29 November, 1932, p.5.
88. See AOT LSD 51, General file for information regarding the schemes.  
The teacher/bailiff/constable of 1933 mentions the introduction of pensions to the Islands in a report to the Tasmanian Government (Hawkins, N., 1933: Report of the Half Caste Reserve, Detailing Failures and Suggestions for Reconstruction, AOT LSD 1/576).
89. "Half-Castes for Farm Labour" Examiner, 7 October, 1941, p.4.

90. Crown Lands Bailiff to Secretary for Lands, telegram, 9 October, 1941: AOT LSD 51, General File.
91. Cape Barren Island Reserve Act, 1945, George VI, no. 14, Tasmania.
92. Joint Committee of Both Houses of Parliament, 1948: "Conditions in the Flinders Island Municipality, Tasmania", Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol. CXXXIX, no. 22.
93. Pitt, C.M., 1942: "The Cape Barren Island Reserve", AOT LSD 1/576.
94. Tindale, N.B., 1953: p.25.
95. "Cape Barren Island people feel neglected", Mercury, 26 August, 1970.
96. Mollison, B., (ed.) 1974a: Synopsis of Data on Tasmanian Aboriginal People, 2nd edition, Psychology Department, University of Tasmania, Occasional Publication, Hobart, sections 3, 4 and 9.  
  
"Helping islanders settle from Bass Strait", Mercury, 12 July, 1968, p.9.  
  
"Services eyes on Island?", Examiner, 31 January, 1969, p.2.
97. Mollison, B., 1974a: op.cit.  
  
Lippmann, B., 1977: A Somewhat Startled Realisation, Office of Commissioner for Community Relations, Canberra.
98. Aboriginal Welfare: conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers, 22-23 July, 1965, Adelaide.
99. "Aborigines get \$25,000 grant", Advocate, August 24, 1968, p.13.
100. Newcombe, K., 1970: "Cape Barren Epic", Togatus, vol. 41, No. 6, pp.13-15.
101. Mollison, B., 1974b: A Chronology of Events Affecting Tasmanian Aboriginal People since contact by Whites (1772-1974) 2nd edition, Psychology Department, Occasional Paper, University of Tasmania, Notes for August 9, 1971.
102. Mollison, B., 1974a: op.cit., Section 1.1.
103. Abscol conference, August 14-15, 1971, Trades Hall, Launceston.
104. Mollison, B., 1974b: op.cit., notes for August 14-15, 1971.
105. Mollison, 1974b: op.cit., Notes for August, 1970.  
  
Newcombe, K., 1970: op.cit., p.14.  
  
"Advisor on islanders appointed", Examiner, 28 March, 1973, p.10.
106. "Truganini to be disturbed no more", Mercury, 1 May, 1976, p.1.

107. Tatz, G. and Chambers, B., 1975: "Cultural Accommodation: the Armidale Experience" in Edgar, D., Sociology of Australian Education, McGraw Hill, Sydney, p.220.
108. "Land rights not on: Gray", Examiner, 10 July, 1985, p.2.

## PART TWO

Study of teacher/community relations, curriculum, pedagogy and other matters at Cape Barren, and other Furneaux Island schools.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION IN THE FURNEAUX ISLANDS (1828-1864)

#### 4.1 Chapter Outline

The present chapter looks at various aspects of the secular and religious instruction of Aboriginal scholars within three very different environments between the years 1828 and 1870: the King's (later Queen's) Orphan School in New Town near Hobart, the Aboriginal Establishment on Flinders Island, and the unofficial schools that operated within the Aboriginal/sealing community on the Bass Strait Islands. The time frame has been selected because 1828 marks the founding of the first Government institution for the education of the poor of Van Diemen's Land and the admission of its first Aboriginal pupil, whilst 1864 signifies the termination of a period of Straits history when the only educational provisions for the "half-caste" children were those offered by educated individuals who offered their services as teachers gratis, to the community.

#### 4.2 The Orphan School, New Town

The King's Orphan school opened in New Town in 1828 in the temporary quarters of a converted distillery, and transferred to a more permanent building in 1833.<sup>1</sup> The institution foundered in 1879, but the buildings survive today as part of St John's Park geriatric hospital.<sup>2</sup> The school was to cater for orphans of convict and free, for children of

the utterly destitute and for children whose moral or physical well-being were considered to be jeopardised by parental vices such as profligacy, alcoholism, and promiscuity.<sup>3</sup> When an Aboriginal boy, "Tommy", appeared before the King's Orphan School Committee on 2 August 1828, he was deemed "a most proper object for admission".<sup>4</sup> Between 1830 and 1847, at least two dozen "native Aboriginal" or "half-caste" children were admitted to the male and female Orphan schools.<sup>5</sup> Many of these children had been sent down from the Establishment on Flinders Island. At least seven Aboriginal scholars did not survive their education, for death exacted a heavy toll on black and white inmates of the Orphan school.<sup>6</sup>

The Dickensian ambience of the school was illustrated by an article which appeared in the Colonial Times in April 1839. The journalistic party that visited the Boy's Orphan school reported on the state of the buildings, which by then had been opened only six years:

Everyone knows how pleasing an appearance the exterior of the building exhibits: we wish we could say as much of the interior: but this, we cannot do, as the majority of the apartments, allotted to the use of the children, are cold, comfortless, and ill-arranged, upon a most mistaken system of parsimonious economy. The washing places ... are highly objectionable: they consist of cell-like rooms, paved with flags, with a stone trough in the centre, open at both ends, and, consequently, extremely cold and comfortless. Indeed, the prevalence of stone pavement, throughout the lower apartments of the building, is, in our humble opinion, highly detrimental to the health of the inmates; in one room, we saw five little fellows, blue and shivering with cold; there was, it is true, a fireplace in the room, but no fire. In short, there seems to be no attempt at comfort for the boys, whose general appearance bespeaks ajectness and squalor. We have seen many assemblages of children in our time, both at home and abroad, but never did we see two hundred human beings, that exhibited so squalid an appearance, as did the majority of the Queen's Orphans. Some half dozen or so - and amongst these a black native boy - appeared intelligent and sprightly; but the majority, as we have already observed, displayed a very different appearance.<sup>7</sup>

With regard to the cold, April is not usually the coldest month in the Tasmanian climate, and at the time the article was written the children were yet to bear the full brunt of winter. The journalist went on to describe the boys' playground as exposed and unsheltered, and complained that no provisions were made in the event of a fire. Though the place was notably clean, it was concluded that "too much labor is expended upon it, which might be remedied, if a better supply of water were provided".<sup>8</sup> The accounts in the School Committee's Minute Book, (1828-1833) of Beadles, Masters and Mistresses dismissed or reprimanded for misdemeanors including forging accounts, appropriating children's rations for their own profit, feeding the children's food to poultry, or for cruelty to the children and insubordination to superiors,<sup>9</sup> are palpably Dickensian.

The schools' servants, and many of its teachers were convicts. The teachers lacked educational training, were too few, and were underpaid. The Colonial Times article asserted that despite the teachers' inadequacies, "The regulations are good, and the system of tuition, tolerable", and that "Due attention is paid to religious instruction". Several years prior to the Orphan School's founding, "Dr Bell's National system of Education" had been introduced to the Colony by the Superintendent for Government schools.<sup>10</sup> This system was run on monitorial lines, in which older pupils were used to teach their juniors. In 1839 the British and Foreign Schools Society methods were endorsed for use in State Schools. The BFSS system taught the three Rs and relied on the Bible as a basic text for reading, dictation and memorisation by the scholars. Teachers, however, were ordered to refrain from commentary on the scriptures, so that children were not

exposed to interpretations that were contrary to the theological principles of their parents' religion. The use of the non-denominational BFSS pedagogy had been decreed by Governor Franklin in an effort to defuse the bitter sectarian rivalry that had beleaguered the Colony.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the religious core curriculum, the girls of the Orphan School were taught sewing, whilst the boys learnt simple vocational skills such as tailoring and shoemaking.<sup>12</sup> Despite the unfavourable learning conditions of the Orphan School, the Aboriginal scholars were successful, not only in learning English, but in achieving a measure of functional literacy and in memorising tracts of scripture. Indeed, the Aboriginal lad referred to in The Colonial Times of April 1839 even managed to look "intelligent and sprightly", despite his appalling environment, and the enforced separation from his family and his culture.

The black children in the Orphan School however, were sorely missed by their relatives, if the reaction of one aggrieved mother to her child's absence can be regarded as typical. James Backhouse, in his journal of a visit to Van Diemen's Land, recorded meeting an Aboriginal woman on Preservation Island in October 1832. When one member of his party committed the indiscretion of mentioning this woman's son, then at school at New Town, she replied by throwing sticks at him. Backhouse noted that the mention of an absent relative was offensive to the blacks, especially if the person were deceased. In view of the high mortality at the school, the woman may have been justified in considering her son dead.



#### 4.3 Instruction in the Aboriginal Establishment

The aims and design of the curriculum taught to the inmates of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Establishment had much in common with the program of "civilisation and Christianisation" which operated at Macquarie's Aboriginal Institute, at Parramatta, though the ostensible difference between the Institute and the Establishment lay in the anticipated outcomes of the respective "civilisation" programs. Though primarily of a religious nature, the curriculum in the New South Wales Aboriginal school contained a strong bias towards training scholars in domestic and trade skills, which were designed to equip them for a productive working life within the lower echelons of colonial society.<sup>14</sup> The emphasis of the curriculum designed by Robinson and his collaborators, however, was primarily on proselytisation. The Aboriginal captives on Flinders Island were encouraged to adopt a quasi-European lifestyle, to live in huts, cultivate gardens, attend daily religious services, and to dress and behave as if they were "civilised".<sup>15</sup> Yet it appears that their re-entry into colonial society was never seriously countenanced by the authorities - at least not until they were convinced that the race was well-nigh extinct, and their numbers no longer constituted a threat to the security of white settlement. The menace of desperate and defiant warriors terrorising British settlers in the 1820s was all too fresh in the minds of the authorities.<sup>16</sup>

Although the Establishment had been based on Flinders Island since 1832, Robinson did not take up the position of Commandant of the Establishment until October 1835 and left for Port Phillip in January

1839. When Robinson returned to Flinders Island in 1835, there had been three commandants in four years, and the settlement at Wybalena had effectively become a military concentration camp for prisoners of war.<sup>17</sup> Upon resuming command, Robinson brought with him several children who had been attending the Orphan School.<sup>18</sup> Robinson operated a night school and Sunday School for his adult charges, and a report of one of his examinations in May 1837 was submitted to the Colonial authorities in Britain, as evidence of the great progress the Aborigines had made in "civilisation" and Christianisation.<sup>19</sup> The achievements of the Aborigines ranged from some older scholars who were found to be "imperfect in their letters" and with only a perfunctory knowledge with the catechism, to one young scholar who could count to 100, could spell and had a knowledge of numerals to nine. Questions put to the scholars covered a wide range of biblical events and interpretations of Old and New Testaments. "Frederick" was one of the most successful examination candidates. His response to his interrogation shows a thorough understanding of Christian doctrine:

Examination of Frederick.  
Perfect in his letters.

Who made you? - God made me.  
 Who made the trees and the sea? - God.  
 What must you do to be saved? - Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.  
 What did Jesus Christ do for us? - He died for our sins, according to the Scriptures.  
 Do you pray? - Yes, sir.  
 What do you say? - Our Father which art in heaven, &c.  
 How many Gods are there? - One God.  
 What is God? - A Spirit.  
 Who was the first man? - Adam.  
 Who was the first woman? - Eve.  
 Do you like to tell your countrymen about God? - Yes, sir.  
 Where do good people go to when they die? - To heaven.  
 And bad people when they die? - To hell.  
 What is hell? - The devil's place.

This pupil repeated the collect for the second Sunday in Advent. Is a good husband; conduct generally good and industrious. Is a native of the west coast of Van Diemen's Land.<sup>20</sup>

The May 1837 examination was limited to the males of the Establishment. Of the 12 classes comprising an average of 3 scholars, 6 were taught by Aboriginal youths, most, if not all of whom had been former pupils of the Orphan School. Women and girls did not feature in the abovementioned examination transcript. Generally, the females were not as proficient as the males in displaying the results of their instruction, which seems to have been partly attributable to the fact that prior to 1837 the majority of Aborigines sent to the Orphan school had been boys, an imbalance which was later redressed.<sup>21</sup> The lack of females with some previous schooling was heightened by an illness amongst the few female teachers, which occasioned the women to be absent during Robinson's examinations in 1837.

Detailed reports of curriculum, pedagogy, and teacher/student interactions are contained in the writings of the dour Scotsman, the Reverend Thomas Dove, Presbyterian Chaplain to the Establishment between 1837 and 1941. Dove and Robinson had their personal differences which emerged at their first meeting, and developed into a cold feud.<sup>22</sup> Dove's relations with Robinson's sons were even more strained, for Dove accused the young Robinsons, who were supposed to have been teachers, of sabotaging his efforts by enticing Aborigines away to the bush at times allocated for religious devotions.<sup>23</sup>

Dove decreed that English should be the medium of instruction for reasons that are reminiscent of the bilingual education debate in contemporary Aboriginal education. His first reason for not teaching in local language, however, is the very same reason invoked by many Aborigines today, who argue for the preservation of their mother tongue

by writing it down and teaching it to the children.<sup>29</sup> Dove noted that of the 70 Aborigines who remained in 1839, there were 3 or 4 different tribes each with distinctive dialects, and he feared that "ere one or other of these dialects can be mastered, the individuals by whom it is spoken will have ceased to exist".<sup>30</sup> Additionally, he considered that the original languages contained neither the concepts nor the symbolism to embody the principles of Christian religious and moral education. Finally, Dove noted that the "language of the nation by which their country is colonised" was already spoken fluently by the natives.<sup>24</sup> Despite his choice not to employ English as the medium of instructions, of the Aborigines, Dove set about collecting a vocabulary of Tasmanian Aboriginal words, but was nonplussed at the general reluctance of Aborigines to acquaint him with their languages, and could postulate no reason to account for such perversity.<sup>25</sup>

When Dove took over the prime role of catechist and instruction from Catechist Robert Clark, he at first relied on Robinson's technique of question and answer based on the Scriptures. Yet Dove attempted to take his pupils beyond what had by then become familiar, and to instil in their minds a curiosity for learning which he felt would make them more receptive to theological teachings. His educational theory that one could exercise the mind in order that a transfer of learning skills could occur, is still favoured today by educationists who feel that there is a place in the school curriculum for the teaching of abstract or "irrelevant" information. Dove conceded that a great deal would not be gained by teaching the scholars that "the radii of a circle are and must be equal", but nonetheless ordered a blackboard and compass to demonstrate the principle, and justified his action by declaring that he

did so only to arouse their intellectual action thus "imprinting the practical truths of the Gospel". Other teaching aids he used were nursery school pictures of animals, which he found evoked the pupils' interest, to the extent were able to answer simple geographic questions regarding the habitats of lions and elephants.<sup>26</sup>

Dove also employed the monitorial system, his teachers being the youths Walter George Arthur, Thomas Brune and Maryanne. He found the children more educable than their seniors, though by the time he taught them, he noted that they had lost much of what they had learnt at that "valuable institution", the Orphan School. When teaching the children, Dove did not confine his teachings to the communication of religious truths, as he did to the adults, but endeavoured to "enlarge their views and stimulate their curiosity to the wonders of nature and art". He concluded that the "half-castes" were more tractable than the "purely Black" children and cited the case of the youth, Augustus:

It was his privilege to spend a considerable portion of his earlier years at the Orphan School - and when he arrived on the Settlement, he was able to read with ease several portions of the Bible, and to answer correctly a few questions bearing on the doctrines of religion and the duties which we owe to God and to each other. But on coming in contact with his untutored bretheren, he cast all his acquirements to the wind, and sank down into one of the most hopeless savages amongst them.

In contrast, Thomas Thompson, a "half-caste" lad, was adjudged to be "the most improvable of boys", as he showed a thirst for knowledge, and speed in acquiring it. This boy learned some natural history, the value of British coins, and some elementary geography, geology, and astronomy from his teacher.<sup>27</sup>

Though he achieved little rapport with the Aborigines, by the standards of his time, Dove was not totally unsympathetic towards them, and he at least gave them credit for some ingenuity. Commenting on a popular view that the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines represented the lowest state of degradation of humanity, Dove wrote:

If we look, however, to the methods which they devised of procuring shelter and subsistence in their native wilds, to the skill and precision with which they tracked the mazes of the bush, and to the force of invention and of memory which is displayed in the copious vocabulary of their several languages, they claim no inconsiderable share of mental power and activity.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, Dove's perceptions of the Aborigines were shaped by the limits of nineteenth century British ethnocentrism. Dove and others simply could not come to grips with the fact that the Aborigines were inclined to reject European sentiments about the inferiority of so-called "primitives" and strove to perpetuate their own culture. When, for example a group of Aboriginal women decided they had enough of the Establishment and "went bush", Dove used one of the girls to help him seek out their "Breakwind" so that he could conduct a religious service with them. Dove was quite perturbed by the fact that the women knew he was looking for them but remained in hiding.<sup>29</sup> It did not occur to Dove, an educated and intelligent man, that the women's motives could be construed as anything other than "folly and wickedness". Neither did it occur to him that the youth Augustus might have chosen not to display his acquirement of British culture to his elders, lest they regard this as a mark of abrogation of their own culture, or that such cultural constraints might not have applied to the same degree to Thomas Thompson, the child of a white sealer. Dove complained that the adult

Aborigines were capricious - at times they appeared to be devout, compliant and receptive to instruction while at other times they were morose or defiant, and reverted to displays of their own culture,<sup>30</sup> and was at a loss to understand their attachment to their former way of life.

The educational provisions extended towards the Aborigines of the Establishment were imposed upon them by an invading culture that had exiled, imprisoned, and forced the Aborigines to acquire the language and culture of their captors. Furthermore, the methods used to transmit knowledge - an inverted monitorial system in which children were used to teach their elders, can be seen as an affront to the traditional authority structures of Aboriginal society, which accorded status to seniority. In such an environment, the Aborigines had little rational autonomy, and little participation in the design of the classes they were coerced to attend. The responses of the Aborigines to this instruction and civilisation program were varied: some did not achieve literacy, perhaps as a gesture of defiance against Anglo-Australian culture; others used their literacy skills to become mouthpieces of Robinson's propaganda - such were the young editors of the Flinders Island Weekly Chronicle, a manuscript newspaper with the professed aims of providing a record of events on the settlement and promoting "Christianity and civilisation and learning"<sup>31</sup>; whilst other Aborigines used their literacy skills to form an audacious resistance against oppressive conditions in the Establishment by writing petitions to various Colonial authorities, and to no less a dignitary than the Queen of England, asking for intervention in affairs at Flinders Island.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4.4 The community schools

In the absence of any official school in the Straits for the children of the sealing community, individuals of goodwill and some education attempted to pass on their skills to the children. At least one of the Straits children, Lucy Beadon, whose father was financially better off than the other sealers, was sent as a child to reside with a professional family on the northern mainland of Tasmania.<sup>32</sup> A few children from the sealing community attended the Orphan School.<sup>33</sup> In February 1832, the sealer John Smith wrote to the school, requesting the admission of his son, aged about 12 years. The boy's mother was then at the Establishment on Flinders Island. The Committee decided that such a case was not provided for in the regulations of the school, and referred the case to Governor Arthur, who sanctioned the boy's admission provided the father pay the regulated sum of 12 pounds per annum. It may have been that Smith could not afford the sum, or that he changed his mind about sending his son to Hobart, for it appears the boy was not admitted to the school.

The first acknowledged teacher of the island children was the sealer, Thomas Tucker. J.E.C. Calder lavished him with such accolades as the "most daring, active and servicable man of the Straits", and claimed that he had once held a commission in the Royal Navy. Calder wrote that Tucker taught the sealers' children:

it has been said to his credit, that he made a better use of the good training he himself received, than almost any other person would voluntarily have done, in educating gratuitously the sealers' children during such periods of leisure as he could snatch from his adventurous calling.<sup>35</sup>

Calder's view of Tucker contrasts notably with Robinson's assessment of his character. Robinson mistrusted Tucker for his cunning and his



leadership qualities, and accused him (quite justly, it seems) of having murdered Aborigines.<sup>36</sup> A personal communication recorded by Mollison from a descendant of the sealer, Beadon, in 1972, states that Tucker taught the Beadon children to read and write in a stone house on Badger Island.<sup>37</sup> A further piece of information pertaining to Tucker's teaching career is a minute by Henry Jeanneret, then Commandant of the Flinders Island Establishment, that he had engaged Thomas Tucker, "a steady married man ... as Dispenser, Overseer and Schoolmaster and to make himself generally useful".<sup>38</sup> Tucker may not have been the only sealer to devote some energies towards educating the children, for A.L. Meston wrote of Beadon that he "took a great interest in his half caste family and gave them some measure of education."<sup>39</sup> Meston also reported that the sealer, Maynard received a University education before being transported to the Colony.<sup>40</sup>

Though not all testimonies to Tucker's enigmatic character are consistent, there appears to be a greater consensus concerning the next teacher, Lucy Beadon. When Bishop Nixon encountered her in 1854, she was then aged around twenty-five. Nixon wrote of her:

from the pure love of those around her, she daily gathers together the children of the sealers, and does her best to impart to them the rudiments of both secular and religious knowledge.<sup>41</sup>

By most accounts, Lucy Beadon was a remarkable woman: intelligent, fairly well educated, cheerful and hospitable, a wonderful singer, and a devout Christian.<sup>42</sup> Despite her education and religion, she felt deeply for her Aboriginal heritage, for in 1871 she wrote to the Tasmanian Government requesting that Truganini should be permitted to live out her

twilight years in the company of her own kind. This request was rejected by the authorities who felt that Truganini would prefer to remain on the mainland.<sup>44</sup> Whilst Lucy Beadon had no children of her own, she was the undoubtedly the matriarch of the community, whose business affairs she astutely managed. John Anderson, a white hunter and sealer who lived on Flinders Island in the late nineteenth century, fondly reminisced of her after her death calling her a "very noble woman", and "a fairy-like creature of about 18 stone, but of a happy disposition".<sup>44</sup> In recognition of Lucy Beadon's efforts in "educating and civilising the Half-castes", she was granted a life lease on Badger Island by the Tasmanian Government, where she resided in a thatched cottage until her death in 1886.<sup>45</sup>

It is not possible to draw any firm conclusions regarding the curriculum employed by Lucy Beadon in her teaching activities, though there appears no doubt she used the Bible as the basic text for imparting the rudiments of religious knowledge. That she was well respected by the children and the community at large is indisputable, and Nixon's words quoted above, point to the harmonious atmosphere that surrounded her teaching. It is clear, however, that whilst the education of the children was one of her prime preoccupations, she considered business affairs, rather than teaching, to be her favoured vocation. Similarly, the available information regarding the teaching careers of Lucy Beadon's predecessor, Tucker, and possibly Thomas Beadon, or of the Richardsons, the teachers briefly engaged by the community in 1863, is too scant to permit any detailed analysis of curriculum and pedagogy, or teacher/community relations amongst the sealing community during the period under review.

It is apparent that many members of the community placed a high value on the education of their children. The reasons for this, whilst not recorded, may be surmised: the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills would have been an invaluable asset to an isolated community that relied on economic transactions with the outside world in trading of seal skins, kangaroo skins, and muttonbirds. Furthermore, it must have been apparent to them that education could bring with it status and wealth, and a degree of respectability that had not formerly been accorded the Aboriginal/sealing community because of its supposedly ignominious origins. The irony of the situation is that those who pressed the Anglican Church and Tasmanian Government to establish a school in the islands were soon to find that official education brought missionaries, teachers, constables, bureaucrats and politicians to the Furneaux Islands, all of whom extended various degrees of protectionism to the community. The educational effects of such protectionism will be explored in ensuing chapters.

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## CHAPTER FIVE

### Cape Barren Island Education 1871-1928

#### Five Case studies of teachers

##### 5.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter traces the fortunes of the jointly-sponsored Church and State School in the Furneaux Islands from 1871 until 1927. Throughout this period, relations between teachers and the community underwent marked fluctuations, and the words of Archdeacon Reibey, decades earlier, took on a prophetic significance:

It is of the deepest importance that, in making this appointment, the character of the Master should be well known, as well as his fitness to teach. It would be better not to send a Master at all, than to appoint a man whose daily conduct and bearing would not bear the closest observation. The half-castes are peculiarly observant, are easily prejudiced, - and therefore much if not everything will depend upon the opinion they are led to form of the Master in his intercourse with them.<sup>1</sup>

The ensuing sections present a series of five case studies of Furneaux Island teachers and teaching assistants during the period under review. Section 5.2 studies the activities of Henry and Hannah Collis between 1871 and 1882; Section 5.2 discusses the careers of Edward and Maria Stephens on Cape Barren Island from 1890 until 1897; Section 5.3 looks at the work of Charles Stephens, son of Edward Stephens, Charles' wife, Margaret, and sister Maude, between 1898 and 1905. Section 5.4 examines the teaching and other activities of Gustavus Knight and his wife, Minnie, (1906-1910), whilst 5.6 discusses the careers of James and Mary Bladon, from 1911 until early 1928.

## 5.2 Henry and Hannah Collis

The community joyfully welcomed the appointment of Henry Collis in August 1871. His wife Hannah, herself an experienced headmistress, joined her husband the following year.<sup>2</sup> Henry Collis was paid an annual stipend of 100 pounds by the Board of Education; his wife, who in 1872 assumed sole responsibility for teaching on one island while her husband taught on another, received a quarter of that salary.<sup>3</sup> Visiting Anglican clerics, particularly Canon Brownrigg and later Bishop Montgomery, adopted an inspectorial role with regard to the school, reporting to the Government on their return from missionary voyages on the abilities of teaching and pupils, and on any problems that had arisen in connection with the school. As P.R. Hart in his research on Bishop Montgomery has pointed out, the partnership between the Anglican Church and the Tasmanian Government established in 1871, can be considered unique in Tasmanian educational history.<sup>4</sup> Given the fact that the Tasmanian Government had been committed to non-denominational State education since the introduction of the BFSS method in 1839,<sup>5</sup> the partnership illustrates the paternalistic regard of the authorities for the community - for the "half-castes" were considered to require, not only the civilising influences of schoolteacher/catechists, but of missionaries as well.

In his earlier visits to the Straits between 1872 and 1874, Canon Marcus Brownrigg lavished praise on the Furneaux Island schools, and commended the dedication of Henry and Hannah Collis.<sup>6</sup> In 1872, the Board of Education reported to Parliament that the teachers had opened four part-time schools in the Furneaux islands: two on Cape Barren



Island: with 23 and 19 scholars, one on Badger Island with an enrolment of 24, and another on Chappell Island, with 21 pupils. Many of the scholars attended two or more schools, making a total pupil attendance of 45.<sup>6</sup> In 1872, a schoolhouse was erected on Badger Island, and shortly afterwards, another was built on Cape Barren Island.<sup>7</sup> For six months prior to the erection of the first school, Henry Collis taught in a tent.<sup>8</sup> A local school board had been formed, which reported to the Board of Education in 1872 that:

the School as established up to the present time cannot fail to be regarded as a decided success, and its success may be fairly traced to Mr Collis' untiring exertions.<sup>9</sup>

Unfortunately, no hint is given of the composition of the Board, although it is reasonable to assume that it comprised, partly or wholly, members of the local community. The establishment of a local school Board of Advice at that time was not peculiar to the Straits, but was then a practice favoured by the Board of Education.<sup>10</sup> In 1873, 20 visits were made to the school, 11 by members of the School Board. The following year, 3 visits were made by the local School Board and 21 by local residents.<sup>11</sup> There is no record of the School Board after 1874, so it appears to have disbanded in that year.

In his record of the 1872 missionary voyage, Brownrigg remarked upon the very trying conditions under which Henry and Hannah Collis laboured. Their rudimentary classrooms doubled as their residences by night, and were quite devoid of blackboards, maps, or any of the conventional classrooms apparatus. While Henry taught in one school, Hannah was frequently away conducting classes on another island. Despite the difficulties which beset the Bass Strait schools in the

earlier years, the children loved their lessons, and attended regularly.<sup>12</sup>

Although by the 1870s there was a very sizeable colony of white lease-holders on the Furneaux islands, and a fair proportion of white children, Collis' school was racially segregated, catering only for the "half-caste" children. However, Brownrigg was so delighted with the success of the venture in 1872, that he resolved to call upon the Board of Education to make similar provisions for education of the white children.<sup>13</sup> Brownrigg's approach to the Board of Education was not successful, and no formal education was offered on the islands to the children of white graziers until the Whitemark school opened on Flinders Island in 1910.<sup>14</sup> Why the schools administered by Hannah and Henry Collis should not have catered for white children was never clearly stated, though there seems to have been a tacit understanding that white children did not require the same type of missionary ministrations as Aboriginal descendants. As discussed in Chapter Two it was considered quite commonplace for most Aboriginal children throughout Australia to be schooled in classes segregated from whites in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In 1873, the Board of Education reported that the education at his school had reached class III standard.<sup>15</sup> This achievement is not inconsiderable, when one considers that in a state-wide education system that promoted students only when they could demonstrate to an Inspector that they had attained prerequisite skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic, many white Tasmanian students left school without having reached grade III.<sup>16</sup> After Brownrigg visited the Furneaux Islands in 1874, he wrote of the scholars:

Their reading was very good, and the working out of the questions in arithmetic, if not in every case quickly performed, possessed at least the merit of correctness. The upper class wrote very fairly from dictation, and the penmanship throughout the school generally was excellent, in some instances remarkably so.<sup>17</sup>

But on a subsequent visit, Brownrigg noted a loss of interest in the school and a tailing off in attendances,<sup>19</sup> though he postulated no reason to account for this phenomenon. Bishop Bromby, Brownrigg's companion on his 1876 voyage, reported to his Anglican parishioners:

I spent an hour in the school, and examined the classes. I found the children expert in the mechanical work of a school. They were good writers and spellers, but, their vocabulary being confined to few and monotonous wants, their reading wanted intelligence, the very words and ideas of their reading-book being strange to them.<sup>19</sup>

That these children should have a limited understanding of the concepts and vocabulary of their reading texts is of small wonder, for their texts were designed for British classrooms, and even the Director of Education of the day recognised that the vocabulary of the prescribed reading series was foreign to the experience of white Tasmanian pupils.<sup>20</sup> The texts must have been much more inappropriate to the lifestyles of children descended from Aborigines and sealers, living on remote island in Bass Strait. The Bishop appears not to have understood the degree to which the children were isolated, not just geographically, but culturally and even linguistically from British society. The development of a slight, but distinctive dialect of English by the community is a theme explored in a thesis by P. Sutton which notes certain phonological peculiarities in the speech of the Cape Barren Islanders.<sup>21</sup>

By 1880, the low attendance rate of 8 scholars prompted the Board of Education to review the expediency of maintaining the school in Bass Strait, which by that stage had become permanently based on Cape Barren Island, and the advice of Canon Brownrigg was sought on the matter. Brownrigg's reply is indicative of the true regard in which the Anglican Church and the Tasmanian Government held the community. He declared that the school should be treated differently from any other Tasmanian school because of the moral duty owed by the State to Aboriginal descendants, and secondly, because if the school were closed: "the only civilising influence will be removed from the half-castes".<sup>22</sup> Brownrigg proposed that instead of closing the school, police protection ought to be extended to the isles, for he considered that this would preserve law and order generally (by preventing the sale of alcohol to the community), and would have the effect of improving school attendances.<sup>23</sup> On Brownrigg's advice, the Board of Education permitted the school to remain open despite the disproportionate per capita cost of attending pupils, so that the presence of a suitable schoolmaster might check the community's "otherwise inevitable relapse into barbarism".<sup>24</sup> Nonetheless the school closed in December 1882 when Collis resigned due to ill-health, and the difficult conditions under which he laboured.<sup>25</sup> Henry Collis was not only expected to perform teaching and missionary duties, but, as the only permanent white Government employee amongst the community, he was required to perform extra duties, not the least among which were vaccinating the whole community against a typhus epidemic (although he had no medical training) and persuading them that leaving muttonbird entrails outside their huts constituted a health hazard.<sup>26</sup> When Henry and Hannah Collis

resigned at the end of 1882, they had taught eleven years on the islands. In recognition of Henry Collis' work and the difficulties that had beset him, he was awarded a gratuity of 100 pounds upon retirement.<sup>27</sup> After the resignation, there was a hiatus in school provisions until 1890. During this time, community members became anxious that the children should not be further deprived of education. After the creation of the Reserve in 1881, one of the community's priorities in establishing the new township, was to erect a schoolhouse within its precincts, and one man reputedly declared to Brownrigg that: "We can live in mi-mis or under anything until we get the schoolhouse up, and all hands can go at this together".<sup>28</sup> Unlike the Church, which was built by the locals, however, the work on the school was tendered to a contractor from the mainland.<sup>29</sup>

### 5.3 Edward and Maria Stephens

Edward Stephens and his wife, Maria were appointed to the newly completed school on Cape Barren Island in June, 1890,<sup>30</sup> and the school opened in September that year. In his application for a teaching position, Stephens stated his place of birth as Cornwall, England, and his religion as "Anglican with Swedenborgian opinions". At the time of his appointment to Cape Barren, Stephens was approaching fifty years of age.<sup>31</sup> Stephens claimed to have taught in South Australia, and to have established the Launceston Telegraph, a major Tasmanian newspaper of the day. He had also received some literary awards for his writings. Immediately prior to his teaching application, Stephens was mining on the West Coast of Tasmania. Why he should have descended on the rigid social scale of Colonial Tasmania, from journalist to West Coast miner,

is not explained by the records, though one can adduce that the dipsomaniac tendencies which bedevilled him on Cape Barren Island, might have had something to do with his earlier social demise. When mining in Rosebery, Stephens emerged as a political activist, and a leader amongst the miners. In 1886, his character reference from the management of the mine stated that his tastes were "intellectual and cultivated", and that there was nothing known to his referee that would "derogate from his moral character or disqualify him as a Teacher of the Young".<sup>32</sup> Stephens thus emerges as a complex character: intelligent well-read, sensitive, and politically aware, and, at the outset of his Island teaching career, sympathetically inclined towards the Cape Barren Islanders.

Collusion between the Anglican Church and Tasmanian Government over the Cape Barren Island school intensified in the 1890s. The terms of Stephens' contract were that he and his wife should jointly receive a salary of 120 pounds from the Education Department<sup>33</sup> and an additional grant of 50 pounds from the Church of England, in return for devoting one week in four to visiting other Furneaux Islands "for missionary purposes".<sup>34</sup> Stephens was warned that with respect to the management of the school, there should be no deviation from regular routine without previous sanction or a subsequent report to the Department. The Director of Education, Thomas Stephens, pointed out that elsewhere in Tasmania, State schools:

should not and must not attempt to take the place that ought to be filled by the churches.<sup>35</sup>

Ironically enough, in regard to the fulfilment of missionary duties, the arrangement at Cape Barren Island was to be:

an entirely exceptional affair, quite outside the regulations of the Department.<sup>36</sup>

Mrs Stephens was exhorted to regard her allotted, paid teaching hours as the very minimum she should devote to the school, since its success would be dependent upon an energetic teaching partnership with her husband. Edward Stephens was warned against smoking in front of the children, and to refrain from "over indulgence in any bad habit".<sup>37</sup>

Stephens had ambitious plans for Cape Barren Island. One of his first ideas was to start a fish curing plant to provide a boost to the Reserve economy, but, upon suggesting this to the Education Department, was rebuked for overstepping his role as a teacher and cautioned that he could advise the community if he so wished, but, as a public officer, must not enter into commercial transactions of any sort.<sup>39</sup> Stephens took the initiative of designing uniforms for the schoolchildren, pink and white aprons for the girls, and white jackets trimmed with blue for the boys. It seems that Stephens bore most of the cost himself, with a small subsidy from the parents, and was again rebuffed by the Department for entering into financial transactions with the community.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, he was reprimanded for having altered the school buildings without permission, and for having spoken to the community about:

certain alleged rights of their's which are purely imaginary, in a way which is more likely to hamper the Government in trying to improve their conditions than to do them any good.<sup>40</sup>

No clarification was offered by the Director of Education of the nature of these "alleged rights" of which Stephens was supposed to have spoken. Stephens was also reproved for having written to the Press without authorisation,<sup>41</sup> and was threatened with dismissal unless he curbed any

further propensities towards independent action. The Tasmanian Government's position on community "rights" thus becomes apparent from the above letter: in contrast to Stephens, high ranking officials of the day were anxious to conceal the issue and to avert political agitation of any kind in order to facilitate the management of the community according to Government terms.

During the first year of its operation, Stephens' school generated an immense amount of interest within the community, and attracted no fewer than 390 visitors. Nearly all of these visits were made by parents and local community members, many of whom, it seems, had been assisting the children in their schoolwork. Stephens found that the steady stream of visitors interfered with the management of classes and referred the matter to the Director of Education. It was decreed that mass visiting should be stopped, and considered that the school could be said to be working efficiently unless the children worked without assistance in classroom, and did their set home lessons unaided. The Director of Education maintained not the slightest objection to 2 or 3 visitors, however, provided visitors come on a set afternoon each week, and were prepared to sit quietly and observe the lessons without interfering or otherwise distracting the children.<sup>42</sup> After the initial curtailment of visits, they were not resumed.<sup>43</sup> It seems that the community quickly took to heart the message that the school was not theirs, but an institution of the Tasmanian Government.

The vicissitudes of Stephens' fortunes took a more favourable turn, when in February 1892, Inspector Joseph Masters, of the Education Department, visited the school in the company of Bishop Montgomery.



They found a huge Welcome flag festooned with an arch of flowers and evergreens awaiting them outside the schoolhouse. Following the inspection of the school the community assembled in the schoolhouse and an address was delivered to the Bishop, requesting him to:

kindly assure the Government of Tasmania of our gratitude for granting to our children the like educational advantages which are enjoyed on the mainland, and permit us to say that the average attendance last year of upward of 30 scholars is no small proof of how highly we value those advantages.<sup>44</sup>

Montgomery considered that this speech was evidence that under the pastoral care of Stephens and his family, the community had made steady intellectual, moral and spiritual progress, and he thereafter became Stephens' staunchest ally.

The inspection reports on the Cape Barren Island School by Joseph Masters provide a good deal of information on the subjects taught by Edward Stephens. On his first report in 1892, Masters noted that Stephens had modified the set curriculum by deliberately neglecting to teach drill and urged that drill lessons be reinstated since they would assist Stephens to gain more discipline over the pupils, but this appears to have been Stephens' only departure from the prescribed curriculum. Nonetheless, the Inspector admitted that Stephens maintained satisfactory order in the classroom "rather by personal influence than by exact measures" and noted that the children were remarkably obedient and respectful towards their schoolteacher. The subjects assessed by Masters were writing, reading, arithmetic, geography, grammar, sacred history, object lessons, singing and sewing, and the children were deemed to have performed creditably in all of these areas. Masters observed that the attendance of the children was

regular, except in the birding season. Mrs Stephens was teaching full-time, and both teachers were commended for their dedication, and the satisfactory progress they had achieved, considering:

None knew much more than their letters when the teacher took charge.<sup>45</sup>

Masters' desultory post script seems to indicate that during the seven year absence of school teachers from the Straits (1883-1890) parents must have attempted to teach the children the basics of literacy.

The pattern of waning school attendances which characterised the teaching of Henry and Hannah Collis, emerged again with Stephens' school. In 1893 Masters reported that the lack of attendance at the school had become a problem, although in many cases absences were attributable to illness on the settlement.<sup>46</sup> On his visit the following year, Masters found that it was almost impossible to examine the children on account of their shyness and reticence, and he reported that their reading was monotonous. In defence of the teachers, however, he added that:

It is only fair to the teachers to state that the half-caste children (and there are no others here) are very slow to learn, that they have great difficulty in grasping anything that is of an abstract nature, that it is very difficult to ascertain what they know, as they are very timid and reticent by nature.<sup>47</sup>

By 1895 Stephens had completely lost the trust of the community. It was not an uncommon superstition in the late nineteenth century to attribute a sudden downfall in fortunes to a shipwreck, and Stephens considered the wrecking of the mail ketch, the G.V. Holyman in October that year on Cape Barren Island, to be the watershed of his

misfortunes.<sup>48</sup> During a storm, the supply ship he had long awaited foundered on Bung's Reef and all hands were drowned. Afterwards, in a private letter to Montgomery, Stephens accused certain individuals of looting during the melee.<sup>49</sup> Stephens came to breaking point under the strain of retrieving bodies from the wreck, and from being deprived of his supplies from the Tasmanian mainland. The Department came to Stephens' aid by circulating teachers for donations to a relief fund for his family.<sup>50</sup>

Local dissatisfaction with Stephens' intemperance had surfaced almost a year before the wreck. In August 1894, Thomas Mansell and other residents had petitioned the Director of Education to change the management of the school,<sup>51</sup> and were informed that the Director was not aware of need for any change, and that the Minister for Education regretted that the residents did not appreciate the Government's action in establishing a school for their children.<sup>52</sup> In February 1896, an anonymous letter was despatched from Cape Barren Island to the Minister for Education, charging that Stephens neglected his duties when he was in a "beastly state of intoxication", as was frequently the case, and that on occasions he locked the children out of the schoolhouse. The letter also accused Stephens of refusing to let schoolchildren drink from the school rainwater tanks, and with having fired a rifle at two residents of the Reserve, and declaring that he would "shoot all the half-castes and any other caste be damned if he wouldn't".<sup>53</sup> Upon the advice of Montgomery, the Director of Education was reluctant to move Stephens. The Director's defence of Edward Stephens is ironic, when one considers that he had formerly cautioned the schoolteachers that:

Anyone who knows the history of the islanders is well aware of their tendencies, and especially of their fatal craving for drink.<sup>54</sup>

and urged Stephens to set an example in all aspects of his behaviour. In March 1896, Montgomery suggested to the Department that Stephens be allowed a break from the Island, since he had not been away for six years.<sup>55</sup> The Government commissioned John MacLaine, a grazier and Justice of the Peace from Clarke's Island, to investigate the allegations against Stephens. MacLaine upheld the charges, and considered that, if anything, they were understated, and recommended that Stephens be temporarily removed from Cape Barren Island. The Bishop brought Stephens to Hobart and arranged for him to see a doctor who had been briefed on Stephens' case history. After the visit, Montgomery informed the Department that Stephens had "perfectly recovered his balance" and that the doctor had "frightened him out of all chance of mistakes".<sup>57</sup> Montgomery and the Minister for Education considered that despite Stephens' indiscretions, he should be retained, since the man possessed:

a combination of qualifications which it might be difficult to find elsewhere, and Mrs Stephens has done her work among the half-castes with very considerable sympathy and devotedness.<sup>58</sup>

Stephens returned to the Island, although it was not long before Thomas Mansell again wrote to the Department accusing Stephens of ignoring the wishes of the heads of families, of misappropriating school property, and threatening individuals with violence. Mansell warned that the community would stage a strike by not sending the children to school unless Stephens were removed.<sup>59</sup> Stephens then wrote to the Department, urging that the compulsory clause of the Education Act be

enforced, and parents prosecuted for not sending their children to school.<sup>60</sup> The Education Department, however, had no wish to incur further strife with the community, and counselled Stephens to wait until things sorted themselves out.<sup>61</sup>

In September 1896 a fresh petition, signed by twelve Cape Barren residents, reached the Department, repeating charges of misconduct against Stephens and claiming that he had struck Thomas Mansell and threatened him with a pistol.<sup>62</sup> The Director of Education referred this letter to Stephens for comment. He emphatically denied the charges, and in a plaintive tone of injured indignation, responded that:

The thought of being crushed by such immoral people, after ruining myself financially for their good, is maddening. Although I seem to bear up outwardly I feel it is slowly killing me. Six years in this awful place with such a result is appalling. Do remove me to the mainland, where I can be understood by and have the sympathy and protection of my own colour, and do not allow me to go down to the grave with this undeserved disgrace upon me.<sup>63</sup>

The "financial ruin" to which Stephens averted, seems to have been his alleged payment of 87 pounds in unpaid loans to the community, and 7 pounds towards the cost of school uniforms.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, Stephens claimed to have paid for all school fuel between 1890 and 1897, and acted as postmaster without cost to the Government.<sup>65</sup> In November 1896, Montgomery wrote to the Director of Education insisting that "all that Mr Stephens says about the Half-Castes is just what I believe to be true" and suggested that Stephens should be allowed to sort out his problems with the community rather than having an untried man placed in his position.<sup>66</sup> The Director of Education then wrote to Stephens advising him that he would be "master of the situation" if he would only

remain "master of himself".<sup>67</sup> The residents of Cape Barren were informed by the Education Department in December that year that there were insufficient grounds for altering existing staffing arrangements at the school.<sup>68</sup>

Towards the end of 1896 some white residents of Flinders Island applied to the Education Department to have a teacher appointed for their children, and proposed that Stephens could travel by boat to Flinders Island and teach there part-time.<sup>69</sup> Stephens approved of these arrangements but pointed out that any visits to Whitemark would depend on the regularity of the weather. and he later added the stipulation that no "half-caste" children should be permitted to attend the new school.<sup>70</sup> It is unfortunate that Stephens' ideas on segregation cannot be further explored, as the letters indexed in the correspondence register do not appear to be extant. In a further letter to the Director of Education, Stephens also requested permission to alter the Cape Barren Island schoolhouse so that the few white children at his school (possibly his own, and the children of nearby graziers) could be educated apart from the others. The Minister for Education replied that:

If provision can be made, without adding cost of building, for separate teaching of white and half-caste children, I am willing that Mr Stephens' suggestion should be carried out.<sup>71</sup>

In 1897, Edward Stephens tendered his resignation, before official educational segregation could be implemented in the Furneaux Islands.<sup>72</sup>

#### 5.4 Charles, Margaret, and Maud Stephens

To the alarm of the community, Stephens' son, Charles, expressed an interest in taking over the principalship. Montgomery was delighted with the proposition, and wrote to the Department that it would be "the happiest of all solutions to get him to take over the school".<sup>73</sup> That way, neither the Church nor the Education Department would appear to lose face over Edward Stephens' resignation, and it would render the community's coup over Stephens and the Department a Pyrrhic victory. Montgomery insisted however, that Charles should receive his teacher training away from the island for he believed that "what young Stephens wants is as much training and education in every direction and association with good people away from the island".<sup>74</sup> Charles spent his year of teacher training as a pupil teacher at the Goulbourn Street Primary School in Hobart,<sup>75</sup> and took over as head of the Cape Barren Island school in 1898 when he was almost twenty four years of age. Charles was permitted to undertake Church duties under the direction of Bishop Montgomery, similar to those undertaken by his father, and was paid an allowance for this by the Church.<sup>76</sup>

From the outset of his teaching career, Charles was anxious to avoid what he considered to be the mistakes of his father, which he attributed less to alcoholism and ethnocentrism than to being too lenient on the community and lending them things when they came to him for assistance.<sup>77</sup> It is not surprising that the Island teachers were beset with constant requests for aid, for they were the only full-time residents on a fixed annual income. Yet Charles adamantly refused to lend any money or other items and was reluctant to invite the people

inside his home, for fear that they would lose respect for him. It appears nonetheless, from Charles Stephens' comments to Bishop Montgomery, that the people held him in no high regard in the first place. They were, no doubt, influenced by the earlier events which had transpired during his father's term as schoolteacher, and they apparently resented a young man whom they had known from boyhood exercising such authority over them. By the time Charles Stephens became head teacher, the community had become well versed in tactics of resistance to white authority, and wrote numerous letters to the Education Department requesting his dismissal.<sup>79</sup> In November 1899, Charles Stephens wrote to Montgomery, informing him that:

They actually stand on the bank out of my sight, with a clock, and check my time of going into school with theirs, then they lie down in the sun until time for the children to go home, when they look at their clock to see if it is exactly to the minute. If a little before, they would bring a charge of neglect of duty, if a little over, they would get a petition saying that the teacher was overtaxing the brains of the scholars.<sup>80</sup>

Charles Stephens' disdain for the community is evident from his notes in the Cape Barren Island School Record Book. His records show that on occasions he dealt out severe corporal punishment to the children for petty offences, and when parents complained of the severity of the punishment he treated their complaint with bemused contempt by insisting they address their aggrievances to the relevant authorities. Once the letter was written and delivered to Stephens for posting, he smugly noted that "I did not say I would send it". Another instance of Charles Stephens' authoritarian approach is his letter to a dying woman, informing her that her children had been suspended from school on account of the serious nature of the illness in her home. The woman



died the following day, and Stephens refused to let the children re-enter the school since the family had not complied with his directive that the house should be thoroughly cleaned, disinfected and ventilated. Though Stephens' directive may have had some merit from a medical standpoint, his approach to the situation illustrates a great deal of insensitivity and paternalism on his part, for the children were excluded from school for an inordinately long time. The following excerpt from the Record Book further illustrates the condescending tone he adopted with respect to the community and his scholars and illuminate his teaching priorities, which appear to have been more directed towards efficient administration than pupil welfare:

On account of Frances Mansell (aged 18) only coming to school on sewing afternoons for 3 weeks and thus spoiling the average attendance besides making a convenience of the school I deemed it necessary to make enquiries at once, to prevent others from acting in the same way when they became over age. And also to see if the girl really wanted to learn all she could in other subjects. Reply came "Fanny will not be coming to school". 81.

In resistance to Charles Stephens' authoritarianism, many parents did not send their children to school, and moved outside the compulsory school radius of two miles. When Stephens requested that a constable should be sent to the Reserve to act as a truant officer, this increased their animosity against him.<sup>82</sup> In October 1900, Charles Stephens wrote to Montgomery, warning him of deteriorating relations with the community. Apparently the Cape Barren Islanders held the Bishop responsible for the enactment of laws affecting the muttonbird industry and, although the regulations were designed for the protection of the community and the survival of the industry, they felt increasingly threatened by official intervention in their lifestyles. Stephens advised Montgomery that:

the petitions on foot about us, the school, church, land, etc. is enough to make a strong man "heave".<sup>83</sup>

The people wanted nothing to do with the Bishop or the schoolteacher, Stephens and Montgomery were "wrapped up in each other", and having "the law of the land entirely in their hands".<sup>84</sup> In a later letter to Montgomery, Stephens remarked that the community was developing a dread of all forms of official regulation, and concluded that: "the very name of Govt. seems to haunt them, and it is well that such is the case".<sup>85</sup>

Stephens' wife, Margaret, who had been teaching with him in the school, followed the tradition of previous Island school teachers, and broke down from the strain of overwork, and the physical and cultural isolation. She left the Island in 1903 and was replaced as assistant schoolteacher by Stephens' sister, Maud.<sup>86</sup> Charles Stephens successfully applied to continue receiving a joint salary of 120 pounds and undertook to pay his sister from that salary.<sup>87</sup> W.L. Neale, a newly appointed Director of Education, decided at the end of 1904 after consultation with Montgomery's successor, Bishop Mercer, that Stephens should no longer devote one week in six to missionary activities, as was his practice, but should teach full time. Neale considered it anomalous that Stephens received 120 pounds a year instead of the regulation 65 pounds, when his sister had not been teaching continuously. Furthermore, Neale noted that, as the school was closed for birthing for two months of the year, as well as observing standard school holidays, that Stephens was receiving "twice the Regulation salary for about 25 or 26 week's work".<sup>88</sup> Neale decreed that it was the Department's duty to "distribute the vote for teachers' salaries so that no religious denomination may have ground for criticism of our administration".<sup>89</sup>

Charles Stephens took the decision with good grace, and considered that the discontinuation of missionary duties would be a progressive step for all his scholars:

Regarding the half-caste children they will not rejoice in the extra time in school, but they will have a much better chance of receiving a higher classification than in the past.

For the white children it is most certainly a step in the right direction.<sup>90</sup>

The Stephens family left the Island at the end of the school year.

### 5.5 1906-1910: Gustavus and Minnie Knight

On September 14, 1906, Gustavus Knight and his wife, Minnie, arrived on Cape Barren Island and remained there until the end of 1910.<sup>91</sup> The initial task of gaining the confidence and co-operation of the scholars and the community cannot have been an easy one, for relations between the Islanders and the outside world had been severely strained by earlier strife with Edward and Charles Stephens and the Tasmanian authorities. When the Knights arrived, 9 months had elapsed since the Stephens family departure and they were appalled at the derelict state in which they found the school property. When the head teacher opened the schoolhouse doors for the first time, on Monday 17, 1906, he found 24 "unruly, disorderly and backward children" clamouring to get in. So fierce was the onrush to the classroom, that two little girls were trampled in the stampede, and Knight thought it fortunate that the pupils were not wearing shoes.<sup>92</sup>

By December that year, the Knights had doubled the regular daily attendance, and the school appeared to be running smoothly.<sup>93</sup> Knight's

success as a teacher was noted by such eminent onlookers as J.E.C. Lord, Commissioner of Police, J.A. Leach, Victorian Schools Inspector, and a party of 26 ornithologists, Bishop Mercer, and D.M. Davis, an Inspector of Tasmanian schools (north eastern district).<sup>94</sup> Bishop Mercer, during his visit in 1909, was struck by the children's scholastic progress since he last visited in 1905, and another visitor from the ornithological party, who had also visited in the time of Charles Stephens, noted that the children appeared intelligent, alert and responsive, whereas on his former visit they had been uninterested, inert and lifeless.<sup>95</sup>

Much of the content of the report submitted to Parliament by Colonel Lord in 1908 has been discussed in Chapter Three. A significant part of the report, however, dealt with Cape Barren Island school matters. Lord noted the cramped condition of school buildings, and recommended extensions, and partitioning the playground to separate boys from girls. He commended the work of Mr Knight, observing that the children appeared interested in their work, and well disciplined, and noted approvingly that the school curriculum had been extended to include gardening and chip carving. The main educational problems were truancy, the early school leaving age, and subsequent unemployment of school leavers, and Lord proposed several rather radical solutions to these problems. He suggested that the educational radius around the school be extended to include the whole Reserve, in order to make it possible to prosecute those parents who as a gesture of defence against the authorities, had deliberately moved outside the official radius in order to evade the education Act, and recommended that a constable should be made available as a truant inspector, to assist the teacher to

deal with cases of irregular attendance. Additionally he proposed that the school leaving age be raised, so that it should be made compulsory for young people to remain at school until they reached the age of twenty, or passed class III (Primary school) standard, whichever event occurred sooner. As an inducement for children to attend school, Lord recommended that the families of schoolchildren should be granted a free muttonbird licence, subsequent to a certificate of satisfactory school attendance from the schoolteacher, explaining that the merit of such a scheme lay in the fact that the free licence would be of great value to the families, whilst the cost to the Government would be negligible. With regard to the actual operation of the school, Lord was impressed with the high standard of craftwork, and felt that physical exercises, and drill with rods and dumb bells were performed creditably. All this was thought to exemplify Knight's progressive educational methods.<sup>96</sup>

J.A. Leach, lecturer in nature study, and Victorian Inspector of Schools, put the scholars through an oral examination in 1908. The examination was conducted in the formidable presence of his large party of ornithologists, Leach enthusiastically commended their concentration under such conditions. Their writing was observed to be very good, and the reading, though a bit hurried was also deemed to be good. Senator Dobson from Tasmania, upon hearing a report of the school from the bird-watching party, reported to the Tasmanian press that although Mr Knight managed the Island School excellently, there was concern that little was being done for the children after they left school. He suggested that the curriculum be adjusted to include rough carpentry, so that the scholars could learn to build and prepare fishing boats, and be taught the cultivation of vegetables, how to smoke and dry fish, and

rear poultry and pigs, in order to see them through the lean months of the muttonbirds off-season. Like the Commissioner of Police, Dobson's parsimonious instincts surfaced, for he felt that the merit in his plan lay in its relative small cost to the Government.<sup>98</sup> Bishop Mercer, after his visit, made no suggestions as to future directions in which the curriculum could take, but noted that the children appeared to be particularly bright, and felt that "with reasonable care and attention, the results would be equal to any average school on the mainland".<sup>99</sup>

The isolation of the Cape Barren Island school meant that visits from Education Department Inspectors were few and far between. For this reason, Inspector Leach undertook to examine the scholars, and report to the Tasmanian Government. The first inspection visit by a Tasmanian official for some years was carried out by D.M. Davis in 1910. His feelings towards the community were quite friendly, but like many others before him, he lamented the fate of the youths once they had left school. Davis wrote in the Department's annual report to Parliament that:

The Cape Barren Islanders are very harmless, very wanting in industry, and without ambition. They are physically strong, athletic, and capable of work. Apart from muttonbirding they do little, not even providing themselves with fish from the plentiful supplies nearby, and the muttonbirding is now largely in the hands of white people.<sup>100</sup>

Davis considered that a revitalised curriculum, with a strong emphasis on manual arts, should be followed by encouragement to migrate and take up employment elsewhere, or be persuaded to join the Australian Navy.<sup>101</sup> It is apparent, however, that Knight had already recognised the value of an extended manual arts curriculum and encouraged carpentry, gardening, sewing, drawing, and painting.<sup>101</sup>

Knight appears to have secured the goodwill of the community to the extent where they assisted him to repair the schoolhouse, and fence in a vegetable garden, cow enclosure and fowl run. He also encouraged the community to repair the delapidated Church and build a community hall.<sup>102</sup> His manner, not only towards the scholars, but towards the whole community, was described by Leach as: "earnest, kindly, stimulating, yet manly".<sup>103</sup> During his tenure as principal, community sports were instituted, with footraces, chopping and sailing events, in which the residents of the Reserve competed against Knight and other whites from the vicinity of Cape Barren.<sup>104</sup> Another of Knight's initiatives was to start a school fife and drum band for the boys.<sup>105</sup>

Knight set about the task of buying supplies for the school through a series of community concerts and by appealing to the public for subscriptions and donations. He sought carpentering tools, seeds, chip carving knives, wood, sewing needles, cotton, patches, water colour paints, drawing pencils, rubbers, and books for the school library,<sup>106</sup> and appealed to Tasmanian teachers to assist in buying necessary school equipment by selling "some strings of beautiful shells".<sup>107</sup> These string necklaces were one of the few surviving cultural artefacts of the traditional Tasmanian Aboriginals, though the significance of this fact appears to have escaped Knight. Another cultural survival pointed to by Knight, but not recognised as such, was his claim that whenever provisions were short or a supply boat was overdue, the children resorted to eating the traditional bush food of their maternal ancestors.<sup>108</sup> Knight informed the Tasmanian public in the Mercury that:

The children, perforce, get food wherever they can - at a neighbour's generally - or pick up any trifle, such as pig-face, dandelions, she-oak apples, cooked shellfish, small kangaroo apples, etc., all of which they seem to relish, that is, if the quantity they eat is anything to go by.<sup>109</sup>

Knight also noted that some of the children "will eat and sleep at any neighbour's house, just as the fit takes them", interpreting what may well be another sign of traditional Aboriginal culture as neglect on the part of the parents. As evidence of the "half-castes'" abilities to perform regular Anglo-Australian occupations if given sufficient opportunity, Knight informed the Tasmanian public the "girls when trained make first-rate helps in the house", that they quickly adapt to better surroundings, "and become clean and capable housekeepers". Knight thought that any girl returning from such employment on the Tasmanian mainland would, no doubt be enriched by the experience, and prove a role model to others, though if she remained away from Tasmania "so much the better".<sup>110</sup> Such views as those expressed by Knight, accorded well with the views of the Aboriginal Protection Boards throughout Australia, as described in Chapter Two.

Little is known of the community's reaction to Knight's public appeals for charity, or to the suggestions of the various officials concerning desired modifications of the standard Tasmanian curriculum, in order to give it a more overtly vocational bias. Charles Stephens, however, who was resident on the Tasmanian mainland, in 1909, purported to represent the Islanders' views in a letter to the Mercury<sup>111</sup>. Stephens' letter stated a great deal about the practical skills of the community, many of which appear to be as much due to their inheritance from the sealers as they were to the influence of Charles and Edward Stephens and earlier Anglican missionaries. Yet Charles Stephens was prompted to write the letter to the press by a sense of outrage at the comments of Senator Dobson, advocating the teaching of carpentry, gardening, and fish curing, for he felt that the recommendations



reflected very badly on the work of himself and his father over their 16 years of acquaintance with the community. Stephens claimed that several residents would take umbrage at "this public ventilation of their alleged incompetence", and pointed out that during his stay on the Island, no family, to his knowledge, had been without fowls, and that they had had flower and vegetable gardens "from time immemorial". He also asserted that the people had fenced, ploughed and planted out the school reserve, built their own Church and weatherboard cottages, built the cutters they used to sail to Launceston, and strengthened, lengthened and overhauled the police vessel; additionally, he claimed that the fretwork turned out by the residents' own machines would compare favourably with the metalwork at the Hobart and Launceston Technical schools. They had also been taught to cure fish by the Stephens family. The women, he declared, were excellent dressmakers, and dressed themselves extremely well, and nearly every household possessed a Singer sewing machine.<sup>111</sup>

Stephens' point that it was cruel and unjust to brand the Islanders as ignorant and helpless was a valid one, yet his appeal to the Tasmanian public not to encourage the development of what, in the 1980s, is commonly invoked by opponents of any special benefits or concessions to Aborigines as a "handout mentality", was couched in the most supercilious terms. Stephens wrote:

Don't let them sink so low as to make them feel they are looked upon by outsiders as paupers. Give them a name like that, and they'll live down to it, and smile behind their hat every time a bag of flour comes along which they did not have to work for.<sup>112</sup>

In contrast to Charles Stephens, who considered he knew all the answers to the problems of the Reserve (despite his very obvious failure to

rectify these problems in practical terms), Knight discreetly preferred to leave the development of Reserve policy to the relevant authorities. Referring to the indebtedness and idleness of the adult community Knight wrote to the editor of the Mercury in, one suspects, a somewhat laconic tone:

We have here a problem in Socialism which will prove a hard one to solve. It would be a splendid nut for some of our socialistic members to try their teeth on.<sup>113</sup>

Knight appears to have been the anonymous correspondent from Cape Barren Island, who wrote to the Press accusing the Government of neglecting the Reserve by "pigeonholing" Lord's report of 1908 and urging Government action.<sup>114</sup> The Knights left the Island, however, before the Reserve Act was ratified.

#### 5.6 James and Mary Bladon 1911-1928

Captain and Mrs Bladon replaced the Knights in 1911 and stayed until 1928, with a break of one year in 1923.<sup>115</sup> James Bladon was originally appointed as a provisional teacher, and Mary Bladon, despite her mature age, was the junior assistant teacher. Upon entering the Reserve, James Bladon endeavoured to "get in touch" with the people, and he noted in the school Record Book, his apprehension that: "if here long enough to be understood and to understand, shall be able to give these folk more confidence in outsiders".<sup>115</sup> The Bladon's period of tenure was in fact, the longest of any of the Cape Barren schoolteachers. Bladon appears to have been quite fascinated by the community and its origins, and undertook an extensive genealogical study of the community which was submitted to the Government as the basis of schedules for the 1912 Act.<sup>116</sup>

One of the visitors to Cape Barren Island during the Bladon's time was the elderly J. Anderson, formerly a hunter and sealer on Flinders Island in the latter nineteenth century. On a return visit to the Straits in 1922, Anderson met the Bladons and had been shown over the school. The samples of the children's work were judged by Anderson to be "very creditable indeed", and he was moved to ask how the work of the "half and quarter caste" children compared with that of white children, Bladon was reported to have replied:

very fairly indeed, he had some very bright pupils in the school the only drawback being that they had to be absent for nearly five months of the year muttonbirding and therefore forgot a good deal they had learned.<sup>117</sup>

At the time of writing, Anderson was a septuagenarian, and his memory of the length of the children's absence from school may not have served him well. The birding season was, at that time, a period of only 6 weeks, between mid-March and the end of April. Nonetheless, the children often left school well before the season to prepare for it, and returned long after it had finished.

The curriculum adopted by James Bladon appears to be akin to that of the Tasmanian Education Departments District schools today - in addition to elementary instruction in the 3Rs, it had a strong agricultural bent - for the boys, at least. The girls spent a good deal of their time learning sewing from Mrs Bladon. The school reserve was ploughed, and oats planted, from which a two ton crop was harvested. There was also a potato crop. Fruit trees were put in, and poultry raised, the cockerels being distributed to householders. Jersey cattle were also raised with a view to distributing them amongst the small

holdings of the Reserve, so that there should be a regular supply of milk. Bladon had hoped that some of these agricultural ventures might become paying propositions, but conditions of drought were not alleviated by the fact that the settlement relied for its water supply almost entirely on rainwater tanks. The shortage of water put paid to such a scheme, as did the lack of a regular steam-boat service.<sup>118</sup> Bladon's attempt to gain government support for a project of pine planting in the outer Furneaux Islands was also a failure, as the Government appeared reluctant to outlay the required capital.<sup>119</sup>

Bladon's benignly paternal influence extended to the whole of the society of the Reserve, and there appears to have been little active antagonism to his approach. As an infantry Captain who had seen military service in India, Britain and Australia,<sup>120</sup> he managed to inspire in children and adults a strong commitment to the 1914-1918 war effort. Due partly to his influence, at least 21 Cape Barren Island men signed on for Active service, 4 of whom were killed, and 1 died of illness whilst away.<sup>121</sup> Considering the general poverty of the community, their monetary contribution to the war effort appears to have been remarkably generous. The school collected money and "3 dozen pillow-slips, shirts, flannel, towels, soap etc.", for the Red Cross, and additionally forwarded 100 strings of shells to the Air Craft Fund.<sup>122</sup> Grant Rodwell, in his unpublished paper on Cape Barren Island Education 1905 - 1919 has written, on this point:

During the war years the children on the island contributed generously to the State Schools Patriotic and Red Cross Fund, often far in advance of their counterparts in Tasmanian schools. Compare, for example, the children's and parents' contribution from the newly established Hobart High School in October 1914, with the islanders contribution. Presumably the high school children came from a much higher socio-economic group than did the islanders, and that there were more children at the Hobart

High School than the Cape Barren Island School. The total Hobart High School contribution for October 1914 was £9/2/6, whilst the Cape Barren Island Schools' contribution was £20/17/9.<sup>123</sup>

Like his forerunners, Bladon was placed by the authorities in a position of considerable rank above the community - Anderson wrote that as well as teaching school, he acted as the Island's Justice of the Peace, coroner, and also conducted Divine Service, and performed marriage, baptism and burial services.<sup>129</sup> He was also appointed Crown Lands Bailiff. Bladon appears to have perceived his role as an upholder of the Reserve regulations, particularly in relation to the prohibition of alcohol, according to one of his former pupils, still resident on Cape Barren Island. Mrs Sarah Mansell recalls him as a rather strict, yet kindly old gentleman, and remembers having to queue up in an orderly fashion outside the schoolhouse, before marching inside.<sup>124</sup>

## NOTES

1. Reibey, T., 1862: "Letter from the venerable Archdeacon Reibey on the subject of the half-caste islanders in the Straits", Tasmania, Legislative Council Journals, vol.VII, no.17, p.2.
2. Richardson, G. to Collis (Henry), 17 August, 1871, AOT ED 13/11, p.69.  
  
Richardson, G. to Collis, (Hannah), 5 March, 1872, AOT ED 13/11, p.867.
3. When Hannah Collis left the Tasmanian mainland to join her husband in the Straits she was given no guarantee that she would receive a salary for any teaching duties undertaken (Richardson, G. to Collis, H., 5 March, 1872: op.cit.). However, in 1875, the Board of Education reported that 125 pounds had been expended in teaching salaries for the Furneaux Islands (Board of Education, 1875: "Report for the Year 1875", p.14, in Board of Education Reports 1845-1885, AOT). Since Henry Collis was awarded a gratuity of 100 pounds, or a year's salary, upon his retirement in 1882 (Butler, H. to Chief Secretary, 5 September, 1882, AOT CSD 13/16/168), one can conclude that Hannah Collis was eventually paid 25 pounds per year for her full time services. She was awarded no pension on her retirement.
4. Hart, P.R., 1963: The Church of England under Bishop Montgomery, M.A. thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, p.50.
5. Phillips, D.M., 1985: Making more Adequate Provision: State Education in Tasmania, 1839-1985, Tasmanian Government Printer for Education Department of Tasmania, p.17.
6. Brownrigg, M.B., 1872: The Cruise of the Freak, Walch, Hobart, pp.5-6.  
  
Brownrigg, M.B., 1873: "A Narrative of a Visit to the Islands in Bass's and Banks' Straits", Launceston Examiner, 18 March, p.3.  
  
Brownrigg, M.B., 1874: "A Narrative of a Mission Visit to the Kent and Furneaux groups", Launceston Examiner, 24 February, p.5.  
  
Brownrigg, M.B., 1876: "Narrative of the Fifth Mission Visit to the Islands in Banks and Bass's Straits", Launceston Examiner, 12 February, p.3.
7. The Badger Island schoolhouse was burnt down by wildfire in 1893 (Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 17 March, 1892, AOT ED 13/48). The researcher has been unable to trace the fate of the first Cape Barren Island schoolhouse. It appears that it was not built within the area reserved for the community in 1881.
8. "In Memoriam, Mr Henry Collis", Church News, 1 July, 1895, p.312.

9. Board of Education, 1872: op.cit., p.6.
10. See ED.13 (letterbook) series AOT, for correspondence from local Boards of Advice. Letters from or to the Furneaux Island Board of Advice do not appear to be extant.
11. Board of Education, 1873: Report for the Year 1873, p.6 in Board of Education Reports (1845-1885), AOT, Board of Education, 1874: Report for the Year 1874, p.7 in Board of Education Reports (1845-1885), AOT.
12. Brownrigg, M.B., 1872: op.cit., p.5-6.
13. Ibid, p.6.
14. See file: AOT ED 9/13 1819.
15. Board of Education, 1973: op.cit., p.6.
16. Phillips, D., 1985: op.cit., p.42.
17. Brownrigg, M.B., 1874: op.cit.
18. Brownrigg, M.B., 1878: "Narrative of the Seventh Mission Visit to the Islands in Banks and Bass' Straits", Launceston Examiner, 6 February, p.2.
19. "The Bishop's Visit to the Furneaux Islands", Church News, March, 1876, p.425.
20. Board of Education, 1874: op.cit., p.26.  
Board of Education, 1875: op.cit., p.28.  
Board of Education, 1877: Report of Board of Education for the Year 1877 in Board of Education Reports 1845-1885, AOT.
21. Sutton, P., 1969: Cape Barren English, Honours thesis, University of Sydney, New South Wales.

Although Sutton's research took place a century after the period under discussion, there is some evidence that a distinctive dialect had developed amongst the community by the late 1890s. Joseph Masters, Inspector of Schools, commented in 1894 that the children spoke "a kind of jabber" out of school (Masters, J., 1893: Annual Examination, Cape Barren Island School, 31 July, AOT 31/2). The comments of Edward Stephens in relation to the speech of the Cape Barren Islanders are also pertinent to this point. (Stephens, E., 1899: "The Furneaux Islands", manuscript, p.15. Royal Society of Tasmania Archives RS 40/1, University of Tasmania, Hobart). This is not to say that the Cape Barren Islanders have difficulty speaking and understanding standard Australian English, but rather that they modify their speech to a more standard form when communicating with outsiders, while favouring "Cape Barren English" for intra-group communication.

22. Brownrigg, M.B., to Richardson, G., 20 December, 1880, AOT CSD 13/16/168.
23. Ibid.
24. Moore, W. to Chairman of Board of Education, 18 February, 1881, AOT CSD 13/16/168.
25. Giblin, W. to Board of Education, 16 November, 1882, AOT CSD 13/16/168.

A medical certificate furnished by Collis to the Board of Education stated that the Collis family were suffering from anaemia and other digestive disorders from "eating muttonbirds, wallaby, and suchlike objectionable diet" (Murphy, R., 28 January, 1882, AOT CSD 13/16/168). The "objectionable diet" mentioned appears to have been the staple of the community.

26. Vines, E.P., 1879: "Report of Dr Vines upon the fevers in the Islands", Tasmania, House of Assembly Journals, vol. XXXVII, no. 56,

Reibey, T. to Vines, E.P., 24 September, 1879, Ibid., p.6.

Moore, W. to Collis, H., 31 August, 1881, AOT CSD, 13/16/168.

27. Giblin, W. to Board of Education, 16 November, 1882, op.cit.
28. Brownrigg, M.B., 1883: "Narrative of the Eleventh Mission Visit to the Islands in Banks and Bass Strait", Launceston Examiner, Supplement, 3 March.

The supplement is missing from AOT, but the article is reprinted in:

Murray-Smith, S., 1979: Mission to the Islands: Voyages of Canon Marcus Brownrigg, Cat and Fiddle Press, Hobart, reference, p.196.

29. See minute: AOT ED 56, p.19, 2 May, 1882.
30. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 11 June, 1890, AOT ED 13/45, p.88.
31. Stephens, E., Form of Application for Employment as a Teacher, 10 July, 1886, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
32. Stephens, E. to Stephens, T., 21 June, 1886.  
L'Oste, C.F. to Kayser, H.W.F., 7 July, 1886.  
Kayser, H.W.F. to Stephens, E., 8 July, 1886.  
Stephens, E. to Gray, J., 13 May, 1887.  
All references in AOT ED 2/9/1077.
33. The Board of Education became the Education Department in 1886.
34. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 11 June, 1890, AOT ED 13/45, p.88.
35. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 7 December, 1889, AOT ED/3/44, p.205.



36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 17 December, 1890, AOT ED 13/46, p.86.
39. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 3 September, 1891, AOT ED 13/47, p.555.  
  
"Visitation of the Furneaux Islands", Church News, April, 1896, p.447.
40. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 3 September, 1891, op.cit.
41. The researcher has been unable to locate the letter or letters referred to by T. Stephens. They would have been published any time between September 1890 and September of the following year, and there were no fewer than 24 Tasmanian journals at the time. Edward Stephens' position on the rights of the community is intriguing. It appears that his stance could not have been dissimilar to that of Archdeacon Reibey, as explained in Chapter Three, concerning the moral debt owed by white Tasmanians to the "half-caste" community.
42. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 2 May, 1892, AOT ED 13/49, pp.111-112.
43. Masters, J., Inspector's Report, Cape Barren Island State School, 13 February, 1892, AOT ED 31/2.
44. "My Second Visitation to the Furneaux Islands", Church News, March 1892, p.614-5.
45. Masters, J., 1892: op.cit.
46. Masters, J., 1893: Inspector's Report on Cape Barren Island, visited 31 July, 1893, AOT ED 31/2.
47. Masters, J., 1894: Annual Examination of Cape Barren Island State School, 19 November, AOT ED 31/2.
48. Stephens, E. to Stephens, T., 3 October, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
49. Stephens, E. to Montgomery, H.H., 15 October, 1895, AOT NS 373/214/47.
50. Education Index 3/7, Cape Barren Island, Note 15, 5 November, 1895, AOT.
51. Ibid, Note 9, 27 August, 1894.
52. Stephens, T. to Mansell, T. (and the other signatories), 5 October, 1895, AOT ED 13/55, p.520.

53. Anonymous to Stephens, T., 12 February, 1896, AOT 2/9/1077.
54. Stephens, T. to Stephens, E., 1 October, 1891, AOT ED 13/47, p.717.
55. Montgomery, H.H. to Rule, J., 9 March, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
56. MacLaine, J.H. to Braddon, E., 11 May, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
57. Montgomery, H.H. to Rule, J., 11 April, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
58. Masters, J. to Minister for Education, 18 June, 1896,  
Rule, J. to Stephens, E., 25 June, 1896,  
references in AOT ED 2/9/1077.
59. Mansell, T.E. to Education Department, 12 May, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
60. Stephens, E. to Stephens, T., 30 May, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
61. Ibid, post script.
62. Mansell, P., et. al. to "Chairman of the Board of Education", 7 September, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
63. Stephens, E. to Stephens, T., 3 October, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
64. Church News, April, 1896, op.cit.
65. Stephens, E. to Minister for Education, 21 September, 1903, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
66. Montgomery, H.H. to Rule, J., 22 November, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
67. Rule, J. to Stephens, E., 6 November, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
68. Rule, J. to Mansell, T., 22 December, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
69. Education Index 2/7/9957 Note 36, AOT.
70. Ibid Notes 37 and 43.
71. Rule, J. to Stephens, E., March, 1897, AOT ED 13/63, p.217.
72. Stephens, E. to Rule, J., 28 August, 1897, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
73. Montgomery, H.H. to Rule, J., 13 October, 1896, AOT ED 2/17/1819.
74. Montgomery, H.H. to Rule, J., 22 November, 1896, AOT ED 2/9/1077.
75. Stephens, C.: Teaching Record, and Form of Application as a Teacher, 11 November, 1896, AOT ED 2/17/1819.
76. Rule, J. to Stephens, C., 14 October, 1897, AOT ED 2/17/1819.

77. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, 1898-1949, AOT ED 156/5, preliminary notes, 1898.
79. These petitions do not appear to be extant. However, references are made to them in:  
  
Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 28 November, 1899, AOT NS 374/214/47, and in the Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., notes 1898-1905.
80. Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 28 November, 1899, AOT NS 373/214/47.
81. Cape Barren Island School Record Book 1898-1939: op.cit., notes for 1898.
82. Ibid.
83. Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 15 October, 1900, AOT NS 373/214/47.
84. Ibid.
85. Stephens, C. to Montgomery, H.H., 14 January, 1901, AOT NS 373/214/47.
86. Stephens, C. to Minister for Education, 22 October, 1903, AOT ED 2/17/1819,  
  
Education Department, Teachers History, female: Margaret Emily Stephens, AOT ED 44/6, p.186.
87. Ibid.
88. Neale, W.L. to Minister for Education, 18 January, 1905, AOT ED 2/17/1819.
89. Ibid.
90. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., notes for 1905.
91. Ibid., notes 1906-1910.
92. Ibid., notes 17 September, 1906.
93. Ibid., notes 20 December, 1906.

94. Lord, J.E.C., 1908: "Furneaux Islands Report Upon the State of the Islands, the Condition and Mode of Living of Half-Castes, the Existing Methods of Regulating the Reserves, and suggesting lines for Future Administration", Tasmania Parliament, Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol. LIX, no.57.

Knight, G.W. to Minister for Education, 6 December, 1908, AOT, 6 December, 1908, AOT ED 9/10/13.

"On Cape Barren Island: The Teacher and His Scholars", Mercury, 2 April, 1909, p.7.

"The Half-Castes of Cape Barren Island", Mercury, 27 January, 1909, p.2.

"The Straits Islands: Bishop Mercer's visit", Mercury, 15 March, 1909, p.5.

Davis, D.M., 1910 in "Education Department Report for 1910".

Journals and Papers of Parliament, vol. LXV, no.9, p.17.

95. Mercury, 15 March, 1909: op.cit.

Mercury, 2 April, 1909: op.cit.

96. Lord, J.E.C., 1908: op.cit., pp.6-7.

97. Mercury, 2 April, 1909: op.cit.

See also Knight, G.W. to Minister for Education, 6 December, 1908, for comments of Leach et. al., op.cit.

98. "The Half-Castes", Mercury, 5 February, 1909, p.4.

99. Mercury, 125 March, 1909: op.cit.

100. Davis, D.M., 1910: op.cit.

101. Knight, G.W., 1909: "The Half-Castes of Cape Barren Island", Mercury, 27 January, p.2.

102. Knight, G.W., 1906-1910: op.cit.

Knight, G.W. to Minister for Education, 6 December, 1908, Mercury, 2 April, 1909: op.cit.

103. Mercury, 2 April, 1909: op.cit.

104. "Cape Barren Island", Mercury, 21 January, 1910, p.2.

105. Knight, G.W. to Minister for Education, 6 December, 1908, op.cit.

106. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., notes for December, 1907.  
Mercury, 27 January, 1909: op.cit.
107. "Cape Barren Island School", The Educational Record, February, 1907, p.147.
108. Knight, G.W. to Minister for Education, 6 December, 1909, op.cit.
109. Ibid.
110. Ibid.
111. Stephens, C.E., 1909: "The Suggestions of Senator Dobson: some interesting facts", Mercury, 9 February, p.2.
112. Ibid.
113. Knight, G.W., 1909: op.cit.
114. "Cape Barren Island, Complaints of Neglect", Mercury, 21 January, 1910, p.2.  
"The Straits Islands", Mercury, Saturday 5, 1910, p.4.
115. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., notes 1911-1927.
116. Lewis, N. to Bladon, J.M., 17 March, 1911, Royal Society of Tasmania Archives RS 40/1, University of Tasmania, Hobart.
117. Anderson, J. to Robinson, B., undated letter, AOT MM No.79.
118. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., notes for 1919 and 1921.
119. Bladon, J.M. to Lee, W.H., 5 August, 1922.  
Thomas, W.G. to Bladon, J.M., 22 February, 1925,  
Royal Society of Tasmania Archives, Hobart, RS 40/1.
120. Bladon, J.M. to Premier Lewis, 23 January, 1911, Royal Society of Tasmania Archives, Hobart, RS 40/1.
122. Ibid.
123. Rodwell, G., 1986: The Provision of State Education for the Half-Caste Children of Cape Barren Island, 1905-1919, paper given to a conference of Tasmanian historians, University of Tasmania, April, p.12.
124. Mansell, S. to researcher, 28 May, 1983, personal communication to researcher Cape Barren Island.

PLATE 3

Barren Island children, 1911. Source: Beattie Lantern Slides, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



PLATE 4

Green Island school photo 1911, with Governor Sir Henry Barron (centre)  
Beattie Lantern Slides, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery.



## CHAPTER SIX

### Cape Barren Island education 1928-1950

#### 6.1 Chapter Outline

As explained in Chapter Three, conditions of unemployment and overcrowding on the Reserve were among the factors which precipitated some emigration from the Island during the segregation period, despite the lack of official support for outward migration at that time. Whilst some ex-residents of Cape Barren made their homes on the Tasmanian mainland, others travelled no further afield than Flinders Island. Many Aboriginal descendants received their education in Flinders Island schools from 1910 onwards, and in schools on the Tasmanian mainland.<sup>1</sup> A detailed study of Flinders Island education will not be undertaken by the present research, though the point should be made that throughout the segregation phase, the Cape Barren Island school was not the only Tasmanian school to be educating children of Aboriginal descent. The focus of the research will continue to be restricted to Cape Barren Island, firstly because, whilst there were white children in the Island classroom from time to time during the period under review, the instruction was primarily geared towards Aboriginal descendants, and secondly, because since the departure of the Establishment from Flinders Island in 1847, the Cape Barreners were the only Tasmanian community to experience official race-relations policies.

The available information regarding early Island teaching careers has permitted, to this point, a case study approach, whereby the



methods of individual teachers and their relations with the community have been analysed. However, due to a more rapid turnover of staff after the Bladons left early in 1928, the analysis of Cape Barren Island schoolteaching will from now on, rely on a selective, rather than individual approach. Section 6.2 discusses teacher community relations on the Reserve, whilst section 6.3 looks at school matters during the period 1928 to 1950.

## 6.2. Teacher/Community Relations

The major issue to be addressed in the ensuing study of teacher/community relations under the segregation policy is the relative status of teacher superiority, vis à vis the community. As noted in the previous chapter, the teachers were frequently the only residents of the Reserve on a fixed, secure and full-time income, in contrast to the community, which was confronted with unemployment and deprivation during the long off-birding season. In 1928, schoolteacher Norman Hawkins became the first school teacher to be sworn in as Special Constable, to act as a police officer in the absence of full-time constables, who by then were based in Whitemark. Hawkins and his successors were paid a salary by the Police Department and also performed bailiff duties for the Lands Department.<sup>3</sup> Not infrequently, the performance of such official duties took its toll on the time and energy that teachers could devote to the classroom.

An outsider's view of teacher/community relations is described in a report by A.W. Burbury in 1929, which has already been alluded to in Chapter Three. The contrast between the relative prosperity of the teachers and the poverty of the community is sharply illustrated by Burbury:

On an eminence stands a well appointed schoolhouse and teacher's residence: here an enthusiastic and accomplished teacher is endeavouring, with the aid of his wife, herself a certified teacher, to instil into the minds of some fifty children the tenets and principles of the high standard of education afforded by the State system. This within a stones' throw of conditions of squalor, unthrift and worse yet. A Church, which is said to have been built by the half castes in the time of Bishop Montgomery, exists, the schoolteacher conducting services and burials.<sup>4</sup>

Another outsider's view of teacher/community relations during the

Reserve period was depicted in florid style by Examiner reporter,

"R.S.R.", in 1936:

"One man in his time plays many parts," observed the wise Bard of Avon. On Cape Barren Island there is one who is playing many parts at the time. It is the Government officer or magistrate, who is the uncrowned king of the settlement. His must be an almost unique job in the Commonwealth. He numbers amongst his multifarious duties those of schoolmaster, constable, parson, doctor and undertaker.<sup>5</sup>

The schoolteacher referred to was G.H. Smyth, who was also dubbed by

"R.S.R." the "guide, philosopher and friend" of the adult residents.

The journalist's judgement on the teaching abilities of Smyth concurred with the view of the Minister for Lands, who commended Smyth and his wife to the Director of Education in 1938, stating:

they have been a tower of strength, and carried out their work in every way in a most capable manner.

The Reserve has made splendid progress in every direction during Mr Smyth's term of office there. From every avenue I hear nothing but kindly and appreciative comments of your Head Teacher and Mrs Smyth.<sup>6</sup>

Yet Smyth's time on the Reserve was not entirely pacific, due to the nature of the extra duties with which he was encumbered – not the least of which was the administration of a "work for dole" scheme introduced

during the Depression. Smyth wrote to the Lands Department in 1938, stating that he had refused sustenance to G.E. Maynard on the grounds that he had refused to work, and complained that Maynard was continually agitating, writing petitions, and corresponding with the politician, Mr Ockerby. In the interest of harmonious relations with the community, Smyth proposed that "Overseer Lovett" of the Lands Department should assume responsibility for the program, as his own time was so limited.<sup>7</sup> It seems quite remarkable that the administration of a works program should have been vested with a teacher in the first place, when there was, at the time, a resident "overseer".

Smyth's replacement, J.C. Read, received an additional portfolio, as Island magistrate, and became the nominal registrar for relief work, which appears to have been supervised by the Lands Department officer.<sup>8</sup> The lack of clear delineation between Lands Department staff and teacher/bailiff/constables was to prove a sticking point later in the Reserve period. Early in 1949, Oswald Pender-Brookes, a newly appointed teacher, sought and received clarification of his and the agricultural supervisor's respective duties from the Lands Department.<sup>9</sup> Yet a demarcation dispute arose the following year over the management of the community library, which had been vested with Mervyn Radford, of the Lands Department.<sup>10</sup> Ironically, it was the teacher who was asked to act as impounding officer for stray cattle on the Reserve that year. Pender-Brookes' reply to the Education Department that he was unwilling to drive stray cattle to a pound half a mile from the school gives a strong indication that relations with the community were, or at least could be severely strained by the teacher's performance of extra duties. Pender-Brookes claimed that the nature of

the work of an impounding officer hardly befitted the dignity of his position, and urged the Government not to "embarrass a professional man such as a schoolteacher in this way". He pointed out that the duties could mean long absences from the classroom, and that the duty would incur the hostility of the community in a way that would jeopardise his schoolwork, and his religious duties, for Pender-Brookes was also an ordained Anglican Minister. Pender-Brookes' summation of the situation was:

A schoolmaster may do Bailiff duties, and certain Special Constable duties, but he shouldn't be expected to be a cowherd, and it is unfair to place him in a position where hostility would almost certainly be aroused against him which would prejudice his work (his main work) in the School and the Church.<sup>11</sup>

The 1930s and 1940s appear to have been particularly harsh decades in terms of restraints imposed upon the Cape Barreners by the Tasmanian Government and its officers. Norman Hawkins appears to have been one of the more authoritarian schoolteachers of the segregation period. This man exercised his powers as bailiff and constable to remove a Queensland Aboriginal, Billy Samuels, from the Reserve in 1935. In order to stay the eviction, Samuels sought the support of Miss Hudson, who wrote to the authorities vouching for his "good moral character",<sup>12</sup> but Hawkins' recommendation was acted upon. Samuels declared his intention of building a humpy outside the Reserve boundary, but was nonetheless removed from the Island.<sup>13</sup>

Hawkins considered the powers granted him as constable and bailiff were too limiting to achieve his desired objectives as Reserve manager, and wrote to the Lands Department requesting an extension of

responsibilities. He proposed that he should be employed as supervisor, a move prompted by the Australian Board of Mission's earlier recommendation of him for that position. The schoolteacher requested that he be given the power to order every able-bodied man to work on communal land in lieu of paying taxes; that he have power to distrain persons for debts incurred at the local store; that he be granted power to order every able-bodied man to clear his block and to make every resident work for any charitable relief afforded to the Island; that he have the power to search any premises for alcohol without a search warrant, and to impound stray cattle and fine the owners; he also requested powers to close the school for the birding season and to remove strangers from the Reserve. Hawkins recommended that where pensions were granted retrospectively, there should be no lump sum payments to residents, but should be paid in small instalments. He also proposed that the quarterly free visit of the doctor be eliminated, because the people were treating this visit as a gala event, suggesting instead that the sick persons or their relatives should first obtain a certificate from him before travelling in a small boat to Flinders Island for medical attention. He proposed a fee of ten shillings per consultation, which was double what a single person earned in unemployment benefits in one week in 1937,<sup>14</sup> (an amount which is roughly the equivalent of paying \$160 for a medical consultation in 1986 dollars, calculated on double the rate of single unemployment benefits).

The Minister for Lands expressed an intention of appointing Hawkins as administrator of the Reserve in 1933, and instructed the Parliamentary Draftsman to amend the 1912 Act to allow for the appointment of an officer not in the employ of the Lands Department.<sup>15</sup>

No mention can be found in the Tasmanian Government Gazette of such amended regulations, however, so it is assumed that Hawkins was not appointed. It seems the community rejected Hawkins' authoritarianism, for in 1935 the Minister for Lands advised the Education Department that local antagonism towards Hawkins was running so high that it would be advisable to transfer him away from the Island.<sup>16</sup>

A further example of schoolteacher authoritarianism towards the community occurred in 1942, when one teacher/bailiff/constable submitted to the Secretary for Lands that a new Reserve regulation be invoked to enforce a resident to apply for a permit before being allowed to visit Flinders Island or the Tasmanian mainland. The Secretary of Lands' replied that he was: "not prepared to recommend this proposal, as ... it would be a serious interference with the freedom of the residents".<sup>17</sup> The official response appears somewhat anomalous when one considers the other infringements on civil liberties which were enforced under the segregation regulations. One reason for the official reluctance to invoke further segregationist regulations seems to be that the Tasmanian Government was influenced by the rising tide of assimilationist theory throughout Australia, and by then anticipated that segregationist legislation would shortly be revoked. Nonetheless, the issue of permits to visitors to the Reserve during the Reserve period was strictly enforced. When, for example, Miss Hudson applied for permission for a companion to accompany her on the Reserve, the request was refused by the Minister for Lands because the woman in question was not "a fully qualified nurse or an elderly woman with experience".<sup>18</sup> Aside from Billy Samuels, at least one other "troublemaker" (a non-Aboriginal) was removed from the Reserve.<sup>19</sup> Even Tasmanian Aboriginal descendants who

did not live on the Reserve, had to gain ministerial permission to reside there temporarily to care for children who were attending school on Cape Barren Island.<sup>19</sup>

### 6.3 School Matters

The Cape Barren Island School Record Book<sup>21</sup> yields a great deal of information on the quotidian of school life during the segregation period - schoolteachers generally experienced difficulty in coping with the depressed physical conditions on the Reserve, and with the isolation of the settlement. These factors were perceived by the teachers to have exacted a toll on the scholastic achievements of the scholars in that they provided them with a very insular world-view and affected their motivation to excel at school, since there was little hope of subsequent employment other than mutton-birding, once they left school.

For the main part, the children of Cape Barren Island were taught a similar curriculum to that of schoolchildren elsewhere in the State. Alterations to the balance of abstract and practical subjects appear to have been generally more dependent upon the skills, values, training and perceptions of the individual schoolteachers than on specific educational directives. One teacher, for example, decided to demonstrate the function of engines to the boys, and devoted his attentions to inculcating notions of civic pride, and loyalty to the British Empire, whilst others placed more value on religious subjects, gardening, woodwork, or physical education, according to their own particular skills and interests.<sup>22</sup>

This is not to say that teachers received no guidance whatsoever in the form of specific curriculum objectives from the Education

Department or other Government authorities. A Select Committee of Enquiry into the Furneaux Islands reported to the House of Representatives in 1924 that:

the school curriculum should be carefully revised in order to ensure that subjects of a practical nature are given prominence. If possible, rough carpentering and painting, elementary agriculture and allied subjects should be taught.<sup>23</sup>

Whereas five years later, Inspector Wright from the Education Department decreed that the syllabus should include reading, writing, oral and written language, poetry, arithmetic, singing and manual work, without stipulating that any greater attention should be given to manual work than theoretical subjects.<sup>24</sup>

In 1948, in anticipation of the expiration of the 1945 Reserve Act, a Parliamentary Joint Committee recommended that immediate attention should be given to improving the children's health and education, by providing the children with "one Oslo luncheon" or one hot meal per day, and proposed that the school curriculum be revised:

with the object of special tuition in arts and crafts suitable for the half-caste children and by the institution of school agricultural plots designed to give the half-caste children an interest in agriculture.<sup>25</sup>

Both of the suggestions of the 1948 Parliamentary Committee brought Pender-Brookes, the schoolteacher of the day, into conflict with other staff on the Reserve. In their short observation visit to Cape Barren, the members of the Parliamentary Committee had overlooked the fact that for more than a decade, the missionary had catered to the schoolchildren by providing them with hot meals<sup>26</sup> and Miss Hudson was offended that the school should take over this function. Hudson had also voiced her



intention to lease part of the 30 acre school Reserve, but this move was countered by the teacher who claimed that the area she had in mind was required for the schools agricultural plots. Pender-Brookes received the support of the Education Department in the matter, and the land was not leased to the mission.<sup>27</sup>

Prior to Pender-Brookes arrival, several schoolteachers had devoted a good deal of school time to agricultural endeavours. However, Pender-Brookes did not appear to be particularly enthusiastic about the subject, for in response to the 1948 Committee's recommendations, he allocated only two hours per week in the last school period to gardening, the teaching of which was to be undertaken not by himself, but Radford, the Agricultural supervisor. Radford considered the offer of conditions unsatisfactory because of the inadequate time allocated, and anticipated that the pupil's lack of interest in and knowledge of agriculture would make the teaching of agriculture a tedious task. As an alternative, he suggested that Pender-Brookes offer theoretical lessons in the allotted two hours.<sup>28</sup> Also by way of response to the 1948 recommendations, Pender-Brookes proposed to extend the schoolhouse in order to cater for the issue of school lunches. This initiative was not supported by the Education Department: "As there is some doubt as to the continuance of the segregation of the half-castes at C. Barren".<sup>29</sup> All in all, the recommendations of the 1948 Parliamentary report regarding the schoolchildren appear to have effected little substantial change in school matters, except, perhaps, that the head teacher was burdened with additional administrative tasks associated with the receipt of foodstuffs from the Health Department, many of which did not arrive in an edible form.

With regard to the children's scholastic progress, in 1936, Examiner reporter "R.S.R." observed that the Island schoolchildren were alert and intelligent, and that their manual work was admirable:

The youngsters are alert and attentive, and the average adult visitor will gaze with admiration (and not a little envy) at the copper-plate handwriting in the meticulously kept copy-books.

Their manual work and school hobbies, such as the collection of seaweeds and native grasses, shows both careful training and intelligent assimilation. These children are being equipped for the battle of life by a sound rudimentary education and on the most systematised lines which the Department can evolve. There are necessarily limitations in a school of its size, but many of the young people have given evidence of development which should fit them later for wider educational spheres.<sup>30</sup>

However, later in the segregation era, this attentiveness and eagerness to learn was not evident to subsequent teachers, or to Education Department Inspectors, who complained of the difficulty of examining the children orally, on account of their reticence and shyness.<sup>31</sup> Common complaints laid by teachers were ignorance about the outside world, and that students were listless, and non-competitive. One Island teacher went so far as to observe that the children were "like African natives" in their ability to concentrate for long.<sup>32</sup> From their Anglo-Australian perspective, many teachers viewed competition as a valuable tool for improving school performances, and some instigated systems of inter-house competitions, and awarded shields for weekly attendances and success in weekly examinations and sports competitions. The rationale of such strategies was to motivate the children, not just to individual efforts, but to inspire in them a sense of loyalty to a team.<sup>33</sup>

With the lead up to the Second World War, and throughout its duration, notions of nationalism and loyalty to the British Empire

became an integral facet of school experience - not just on Cape Barren Island, but throughout Tasmania. The war-time teacher, Captain Ivan Booth, however appears to have been fervently committed to the nationalist ethic, as evidenced by his jingoistic letter to the Director of Education, congratulating him on his appointment as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, and stating that:

I agree that this is a definite indication of the increasingly-important place that should be given in the Empire and its policies to education.<sup>34</sup>

This same teacher complained that the Island children exhibited no feelings of nationalistic pride or loyalty to the British Empire, and recorded his astonishment that, upon the announcement of the end of World War 2, the children and their parents showed absolutely no signs of relief or joy. He was also astonished to discover that none of his senior pupils know "the three main enemies of the United Nations".<sup>35</sup>

The relative inferiority of Island culture, as perceived by the Education Department, was illustrated by the comment of a School Inspector in 1943, that "the school is apparently the largest cultural influence in the community, and is doing good work in encouraging neatness, cleanliness, and a measure of self respect",<sup>36</sup> The "cultural influence" to which the Inspector was referring, was quite obviously the culture of middle class, Anglo-Australia. As a general rule, the values the teachers tried to indoctrinate in their pupils were those of white Tasmanians. None of the teachers during this period appear to have made any real attempt to understand the values of the community, or to accept them as culturally different, but not culturally inferior - or if any had such an attitudes, they did not express them. It should be noted

here, however, that teachers, were a product of their social class, training, experience and culture. On this point, Aboriginal Educationist Professor Eric Willmott has pointed out that the teachers can also be viewed as "culturally deprived"<sup>37</sup> in the sense that the ethnocentrism of the prevailing Anglo-Australian world view inhibited them appreciating fully the rich social and cultural history of an unique Tasmanian community, or understanding the factors that had contributed to the socially depressed conditions on the Reserve, and the complex interactive effects of isolation, limited experience, pupil motivation and parental attitudes to education on the performance of the pupils.<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the official segregation period, the existence of the school seems to have become an accepted, though peripheral aspect of the community's existence. For the most part, parents displayed little outward interest in the school. Attempts by teachers to establish parents and friends associations faltered, after an initial display of enthusiasm by a few residents. Whilst still active in political affairs relating to the regulation of the Reserve, the parents seem to have largely opted out of educational politics by 1950.<sup>39</sup> Most educational transformations or reforms which occurred during the period (1928-1950) were dependent upon the skills and interests of particular teachers, or devised by Education Department officials or Parliamentary Committees, with no community involvement in the changes.

## NOTES

1. For an account of the childhood experiences of a member of one family of Cape Barren emigres living on Flinders Island, see:  
  
West, I., 1984: Memoirs of a Tasmanian Aborigine, Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra.
2. Though catalogued in the Archives of Tasmania (ED 156/2/1), the Cape Barren Island School register (1906-1927) is missing. This register would indicate the names of the white children who attended the school during this period. It is assumed that the white scholars enrolled between 1928 and 1950 must have been the children of teachers, nearby graziers, or of Lands Department Staff or nurses.
3. Secretary for Lands to Minister for Lands, 27 April, 1933: Memorandum re Cape Barren Island Reserve, AOT LSD 1/576. The Police files (POL 203, 204, 205) and the Lands Department file AOT LSD 51 give an indication of the immense demands made upon the teachers by the performance of police and bailiff duties.
4. Burbury, A.W., 1929: Report on the conditions of the Half Castes at Cape Barren Island Reservation, AOT LSD 1/576, p.4.
5. R.S.R., 1936: "An Island Sanctuary", Examiner, October 3, p.19.
6. Minister for Lands and Works to Minister for Education, Memorandum re Cape Barren Island School, 20 December, 1938, AOT LSD 51.
7. Smyth, G.H. to Minister for Lands and Works, 23 June, 1938, AOT LSD 51.
8. Maynard, B.R. to Davies, T.H., 23 January, 1940, AOT LSD 51.
9. Pitt, C.M. to Pender-Brookes, O., 31 March, 1949, AOT POL 203/1 (Lands Surveys file).
10. Collier, J.D.A. to Pender-Brookes, O., 20 April, 1950, AOT ED 156/1/1.
11. Pender-Brookes, O. to Secretary for Education, 30 April, 1950, AOT ED 156/1/1 (ED correspondence, 1950).
12. Hudson, A.M. to Davies, T.H., 30 September, 1935: AOT LSD 1/576.
13. File relating to Samuels eviction, AOT LSD 1/576.
14. Hawkins, N., 1933: Report on the Half Caste Reserve, Detailing Failures and Suggestions for Reconstruction, AOT LSD 1/576.

15. Minister for Lands and Works to Attorney General, 21 September, 1933: Memorandum re Cape Barren Island Reserve Act, 1912, AOT LSD 1/576.
16. Minister for Lands and Works to Minister for Education, 13 November, 1935: Memorandum re Cape Barren Island State School, AOT LSD 1/576.
17. Secretary for Lands to Minister for Lands, 3 March, 1942: Memorandum re Cape Barren Island Reserve, AOT LSD 51.
18. Minister for Lands, 20 December, 1937: Notes of interview with Miss Hudson, AOT LSD 1/576.
19. File relating to the removal of M.C. Green from the Reserve, 1933, AOT LSD 1/576.
20. Beedon, W. to Minister for Lands, 29 October, 1936, AOT LSD 51.
21. Cape Barren Island School Record Book 1898-1949, AOT ED 156/5.
22. Ibid., notes 1928-1949.
23. "Furneaux Island Half-Castes, Report of Select Committee", 1924 Journals and Papers of Parliament, Tasmania, vol. XCI, no. 48.
24. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op.cit., note for 17 October, 1929.
25. "Conditions in Flinders Island Municipality, Report of the Joint Committee", 1948: Journals and Papers of Parliament, Tasmania vol. CXXXIX, no.22.
26. Hudson, A.M. to Reece, E., 19 February, 1949, AOT ED 156/1/1, (correspondence 1949).
27. Head Teacher to Secretary for Education, 29 July, 1949,  
Pender-Brookes, O., to Secretary for Education, 30 March, 1949.  
References in AOT ED 156/1/1 (correspondence 1949).
28. Pender-Brookes, O. to Secretary for Education, 30 March, 1949, AOT ED 156/1/1 (correspondence 1949).
29. Secretary for Education to Pender-Brookes, O., 2 August, 1949, AOT ED 156/1/1 (correspondence 1949).
30. "R.S.R.", 1936: op.cit.
31. Cape Barren Island School Observation Book (1941-1966), AOT ED 156/4, notes for 24 September, 1943, 13 November, 1944, 30 September, 1947.

32. Cape Barren Island School Record Book: op. cit., entry for 15 July, 1945, and similar comments for 27 October, 1943, and 8 December, 1943.
33. Ibid., especially comments for 13 January, 1942, 20 February, 1942, and 6 March, 1942.
34. Head Teacher (C.I.A. Booth) to Director of Education, 25 June, 1944, in: Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op. cit.
35. Cape Barren Island School Record Book, op. cit., entries for 14 September, 1943, and 24 May, 1945.
36. Cape Barren Island School Observation Book, op. cit., comment for 24 September 1943.
37. Willmott, E. to researcher, written communication, received February, 1986.
38. The nature of the determinants of academic success for school students is complex, and, since an adequate appraisal of this issue demands empirical data, the issue is deemed to be largely outside the scope of this study. Professor B.H. Watts, however, has done extensive research in this field, particularly in relation to Aboriginal education. A summary of her findings regarding the interactive effects of pupil self image and motivation, peer group and parental attitudes and values, and the natures of the community, school, and broader social environment is to be found in chapter 6 of:  
  
Watts, B.H., 1981: Aboriginal Futures, vol. 1, Education Research and Development Committee, Canberra.
39. Cape Barren Island School Observation Book, op. cit., comments for 13 November, 1944, 7 August, 1945, 26 October, 1948 and 18 June, 1950.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### Cape Barren Island Education 1951-1985

#### 7.1 Chapter Outline

This chapter traces the educational history of the Cape Barren Island School from the expiration of the five year Cape Barren Island Reserve Act (1945) until the end of 1985. One of the difficulties confronting the researcher in the analysis of latter-day education on the Island has been the restricted access of documents such as inspection reports (from 1966 onwards) and the School Principals' Journal (Record Book) from 1949. For this reason, the researcher is grateful to the Education Department for making Cape Barren Island School planning files for this period available to the study.

Section 7.2 of this chapter looks at teacher/community relations on Cape Barren Island, whilst 7.3 discusses matters pertaining to the school itself during this period. Prior to 1979, Tasmanian Aboriginal education received little attention outside Cape Barren Island, due, it is assumed, to a widespread and well entrenched intellectual resistance to the notion of the existence of Aborigines in Tasmanian schools, as well as to a lack of general interest in Aboriginal education throughout Australia. Since that date, however, a good deal of educational debate has centred on Aboriginal policy matters, and the final section (7.4) of this chapter outlines the evolution of policy in Tasmanian Aboriginal education between 1979 and 1986.



## 7.2 Teacher/community relations

The legacy of teacher/manager of the Reserve did not disappear with the phasing out of the Reserve at the end of 1950, for teachers continued to inherit additional administrative duties to the present day, although the extraneous tasks performed by school principals have diminished of late. In 1956, schoolteacher, C.F. Saville, was asked by the Department to outline the nature of his additional duties for the benefit of an incoming head teacher. Saville responded that he received 120 pounds per annum from the Lands Department for performing the following tasks:

### Special Constable (Police Duties)

1. Serving of summonses.
2. Investigation of local incidents - refer these, if necessary, to the Police Officer, Whitemark.
3. Report any cases of vagrancy or neglect of children to Whitemark.
4. Distribute Stock and Crop Returns - assist where necessary in the filling in of such returns.
5. Assist the Public Trustee in administering estates of deceased persons.

### Crown Lands Bailiff

1. Forward applications to rent or purchase land.
2. Reply to and act upon any correspondence from the Lands Department.
3. Suggest rentals for land and value improvements.

### Social Services Department

1. Assist with pension applications and report on same.
2. Investigate and report on applications for Relief to Indigent persons - pay allowances fortnightly.
3. Where it is not possible for the Church of England minister to conduct burial services I have accepted responsibility.<sup>1</sup>

Saville also stated that in addition to those formal responsibilities, he helped local residents with tax returns, and organised grave digging as well as operating the lighting generator. He claimed that the time spent on the actual performance of such tasks was negligible, compared with the time expended in correspondence relative to the duties.<sup>1</sup>

In 1969 the "duty statement" of one particular teacher was described by a Mercury reporter as: "honourary policeman, scribe, assistant fire warden, weather observer and Minister".<sup>2</sup> Three years earlier, however, the Education Department's view of the tasks that ought to be performed by a schoolteacher had altered to the extent that it was recognised that the performance of extra tasks, particularly police duties, might place an undue strain on teacher/pupil/community relations,<sup>3</sup> although it was not until 1980 that incoming principal, David Reid, became the first head teacher since 1928 not to be appointed Special Constable. In 1985 the duty of Crown Lands Bailiff, however, continued to rest with the schoolteacher, but with the appointment of the school's first female head teacher, Sandra Reid, in 1986, Crown Lands bailiff duties went to Don Napier of Flinders Island<sup>4</sup> (a former community advisor on Cape Barren Island). Thus, by 1986, the head teaching position has finally been divested of concomitant official duties. One wonders, however, whether the next male principal will be expected to perform bailiff duties.

The point has been made in earlier chapters that teachers have seen themselves as agents of government policy to "civilise" the children through their school experiences, and their parents through the enforcement of government regulations. The period 1951-1985 appears to

be no exception in terms of teacher compliance with official policies towards the community. During the assimilation era, particularly in the mid 1960s, educational provisions on the Island came under very close scrutiny from the Education Department, to ensure that they adequately prepared the scholars to function within the society of mainland Tasmania. With the policy switch from segregation to assimilation at the end of 1950, educational objectives came to be regarded as crucial to the assimilation drive. One strategy first proposed in 1960 and devised again in 1965 was a bursary scheme to pay costs of schooling, clothing, books, accommodation and sundries for Island children to board on the mainland to receive a secondary education, the "idea being to eventually work towards apprenticeships for the children".<sup>5</sup> Another such educational strategy seriously considered by the Department in 1966 was the closure of the Island school, in order to expedite the evacuation from Cape Barren. This proposal was eventually rejected after it was discovered that the community would bitterly oppose its closure. It was therefore recommended that the school should remain open whilst there were school aged children on the Island, for it was felt that the pressure to leave must be subtle and persuasive, and should never be construed as open coercion. The Government was anxious that there should not be any hint of enforced separation of children from parents through educational needs. Another motivation behind the retention of the school was a perverse fear that its closure might actually cause a migratory influx to the Island. Despite assurances from the Cape Barren Islanders that they wanted a school for their children, it was deemed that the people held education in scant regard, and anticipated that if there were not school on the Island, the twin

attractions of non-compulsory school attendance and muttonbirding might prove inducements to the resettlement of Cape Barren.<sup>6</sup>

At least two teachers have made public statements endorsing prevailing Government policy towards the community. In 1969, Head Teacher, John Phelps, wrote to the major mainland newspapers in Tasmania, informing the public of the following "facts":

the race of Cape Barren Islanders must become assimilated into a wider community. The race is too small to continue as an entity ...

At present there are several island children receiving their education on the Tasmanian mainland.

While it is unfortunate that they have to live apart from their parents for much of the year the education they are receiving will do much more to prepare them for a living in a "normal" community than would the education they would receive in the restricted environment of the island.

The Labour (sic) Government wisely supported this scheme - a positive scheme which should do much to break down some of the disharmony which now exists between "whites" and islanders.<sup>7</sup>

More recently another principal, Kieron Burgess, agreed to be interviewed by ABC television on Nationwide, in the place of a spokesperson from the community. No member of the community was willing to publicly state the views of all Island residents, for reasons which were not stated by the program. The particular topic was the State Government's lack of endorsement of land rights, and Burgess declared that the people saw themselves as Cape Barren Islanders and not Aborigines, that they did not particularly support land rights, and that they just wanted to "be left alone".<sup>8</sup> Interestingly enough, the aims of the Cape Barren Island Community Association in 1986 are:

To act with Tasmanian Aborigines in gaining the return of Aboriginal Land.

To work towards the inherent rights of indigenous peoples.

On the whole, there has been little involvement of the adult community in the management of the school since the closure of the Reserve, with, it appears, at least one exception. One petition for instance, seeking the removal of a teacher, was written to the Education Department in 1958. This letter declared that the teacher of the day had little control over the children, and appeared to have less interest in the children and their schoolwork. In the patronising tone invoked by an earlier Director of Education in the case of Edward Stephens, the 1958 petitioner was informed that the Head Teacher was "a very highly qualified man". The Director of Education pointed out that it was difficult to find teachers prepared to serve on Cape Barren Island due to its isolation, and exhorted the parents to give the teacher full support.<sup>10</sup> Some time earlier, the Director had written to the Teacher, Mr F. Farrow, suggesting that a married man should be appointed instead to the school the following year as the workload of the Cape Baren teacher was so high. By the standards of today, the letter is most remarkable for its inherent sexism, with its implication that the wives of teachers should be an unpaid work force in the service of the Education Department. The District Superintendent, Mr Smith, had advised the Director that the teacher, F. Farrow, was:

not paying sufficient attention to (his) health, and realises that there are difficulties associated with living alone and "batching" at the school, particularly as supplies arrive irregularly.

Mr Smith is firmly of the opinion that the work of the school and other administrative duties leave insufficient time for a single man to look after himself satisfactorily and strongly recommends that it would be in (his) interests to be transferred.<sup>11</sup>

During the 1950s, at least two young women from the community were appointed school monitor.<sup>12</sup> Upon the replacement of the single head teacher, however, the incoming married teacher's wife was appointed as monitor. The teacher then tried to have his wife's position upgraded to assistant teacher. Up to, and including 1986, there have been no local Aboriginals employed in a professional capacity (other than monitor), in the school.

In 1966, Gollan Lewis, Superintendent of Primary Education, Special Education and Area Schools, outlined the personal characteristics sought by the Education Department for an appointee to the Cape Barren Island school. Such a teacher should be "mature, dedicated and adaptable", would need to manage a small school with integrated classes, have a knowledge of child development, be highly skilled in adapting curricula, facilities and materials to a wide range of pupil abilities, be flexible and inventive, and be able to inspire "reticent and backward pupils", and, above all, to have the capacity to persevere in the face of discouragements, and "to view the circumstances of the children objectively".<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, a decade later, Lorna Lippmann, from the Office for Community Relations, pointed out that teachers sent to the Island were generally ill-prepared in terms of training in or knowledge of teaching techniques for minority group pupils. According to Lippmann:

The teacher at the Island primary school is replaced every two years and has no special training to equip him/her to deal with culturally different pupils. Teachers of varying capacity volunteer for the task and results vary accordingly. It is doubtful whether sufficient attention is given to the (sometimes hidden) strengths of the community; there is more likely to be emphasis on its more obvious disadvantages.<sup>14</sup>

Teachers sent to the Cape Barren Island School in the 1980s still required no grounding in Aboriginal or even multicultural education

education before their posting to the Island. The prerequisite skills for a principalship appear to have been the abilities to repair a diesel generator, and the capacity to cope with the isolated lifestyle, and manage a small school, rather than a strong commitment to ideals of fostering Aboriginal identity, as expressed in NAEC policy (appendix A). The last school principal, for instance, expressed his reservations about the Aboriginality of the "so-called Aboriginal children" at the school to the researcher in the early months of his tenure as principal in 1983, a view which was not uncommon amongst white residents of the Island at that time.<sup>15</sup>

### 7.3 School Matters

Consistent themes in the reports of school inspectors until 1956 were the children's lack of willingness to engage in oral communication, and their lack of scholastic success relative to the general Tasmanian population.<sup>16</sup> The children's lack of motivation was thought by the Health Department's chief nutritionist, J.F. Howeler, to be linked with nutritional deficiencies uncovered in surveys undertaken in 1956 and 1960.<sup>17</sup> The free school dinners had been discontinued in 1954, because it was felt that the provision of canteen lunches might induce the residents to stay on the Island.<sup>18</sup> Howeler found that the children were eating a nutritionally inadequate diet of wild foods, including sorrel grass, she-oak acorns, pigface buds and wild peaflowers.<sup>19</sup> There was insufficient game on the Island to provide the vitamins and proteins necessary to balance such a diet, and the cost of imported foodstuffs was extremely high. Howeler wrote that:

as a result of limited financial resources and the necessity to import highly priced foods, dietary intakes of many schoolchildren are not adequate. The inadequacy of these diets

does affect the well-being of the children and probably their mental well-being also. The addition of school milk, a small cheese ration and vitamin A, D and C tablets has improved the diets considerably.<sup>20</sup>

Howeler was possibly more aware than her contemporaries of the advisability of adapting such a health program to ensure that it fitted "with the cultural and social structure" of the community. She concluded her paper with the assimilationist rhetoric that:

Healthier Cape Barren children with proper vocational training could make contributions to Australia and in this way acquire full citizenship with all this means in responsibilities and rights.<sup>21</sup>

Subsequent to the research and recommendations of Howeler, Cape Barren Island schoolchildren were again provided with food - this time in the form of peanuts, powdered milk, cheese and oranges by the Health Department, the Save the Children Fund and the Education Department.<sup>22</sup>

Poor nutrition, however, cannot, as Howeler and later Newcombe (1970) suggested, be the only factor that influenced the perceived *poorness of educational standards at the school*. The point should be made that the pupils' isolation, and their relative in exposure to media communications and other forms of technological change of past decades has hindered the development of broad general knowledge, and contributed towards an experiential (as opposed to cultural) deficit. Additionally, one should not undervalue the motivational aspects of educational success. The high unemployment and casual lifestyle on Cape Barren Island has presented little incentive for students to aspire to higher educational standards. However, it should be noted that the Cape Barren Island children who proceeded to secondary education since the mid-



1960s have nearly all progressed satisfactorily in mainland schools.<sup>24</sup> The lethargy of the school children described by Howeler and others in the 1960s was not apparent to the researcher in visits to Cape Barren Island between 1983 and 1985. The children appeared healthy, lively and interested in their school work, and active riders of BMX bicycles around the bike track constructed in the playground. Their level of scholastic achievement appeared quite adequate. A feature of school enrolments between 1983 and 1985 were the large number of non-Aboriginal children. Eight of the sixteen children enrolled in the Primary and Pre-school were the children of teaching and nursing staff, who were not Aboriginal.

Another feature of reports on the schoolchildren in the 1950s and 1960s, that was not evident in later years, was the relatively low rates of attendance (around 80%). In 1964, a reporter for a NSW University magazine wrote that:

The school, run by the State Government, and manned by the schoolmaster and his wife, has an enrolment of twenty-five, ranging in age from six to sixteen, ...

Attendance is irregular. We learnt from three lads we met that they have to attend school only two days a week and never go when it is raining, as they have to walk three miles to get there.

Life is one long holiday for these boys. They have no worries.<sup>25</sup>

One cannot help suspecting that the reporter might have been somewhat gullible in her belief that such part-time attendances had the sanction of the teacher and the Education Department. There has been no problem of consistent irregular attendances of students at the Cape Barren Island school from the 1970s onwards.<sup>26</sup>

On October 21, 1966, the Cape Barren Island Primary School was classified as a Special School by the Education Department, a classification which has stood until the present day.<sup>27</sup> The same year some specific pedagogic and curricular guidelines were framed by the Education Department for application to the school. At this time, the Cape Barren schoolchildren were perceived by the Department to be "isolated or culturally deprived", and little reference was made to their Aboriginality. In November 1966 the Superintendent of Primary Education, Special Education and Area Schools reported to the Director-General of Education on the educational problems associated with the school. This report advocated a view which was in keeping with models of compensatory education, described in Chapter Two, for the school was viewed as the children's sole means of escape from their severely deprived surroundings. Superintendent Lewis noted that whilst the school appeared quite successful in motivating young children, the effect lessened as the children grew older. Superintendent Lewis wrote:

As the pupils move up the school they tend to lose rapport with their teacher, and fail to come into their natural stride of learning. They appear to be unable to compete with the negative influences of their impoverished surroundings or to overcome the restricting effects of their early environment.<sup>28</sup>

Strategies devised by the Education Department to assist the Cape Barren Island pupils to overcome what were considered the restrictions of their environment, included an emphasis on language development in the earliest years of schooling. Language kits and machines devised in the United States of America were used in the Cape Barren Island classroom. Other programs were devised to enable the pupils to proceed at their own pace of learning - a procedure that had been made more feasible by the

decline in pupil numbers that was contingent upon the assimilation policy. An electric stove was installed in 1966 to ensure a regular supply of hot meals for the children, and older children were to be taught cooking. A small workshop was constructed to enable the boys to learn manual arts and technical skills, particularly in the areas of simple carpentry and concreting. Attempts were made to start a pre-school on the Island, but these met with little success.<sup>29</sup> As explained in chapter two, all of the above-mentioned educational strategies developed by the Department were in keeping with notions of Aboriginal persons as "culturally disadvantaged", or with no concept of "tuition for citizenship".

Possibly the most topical educational issue pertaining to Cape Barren Island of late has been the lack of facilities for secondary education on the Island. Prior to 1964, entry to secondary education was on a selective basis, whereby students could only proceed to High School if they succeeded in passing an examination. The alternatives to high schooling were attendance at the Flinders Island District School, remaining in a Post-Primary class at Cape Barren Island, and/or undertaking correspondence courses on the Island. Few Cape Barren students attended High Schools in Tasmania prior to 1966, probably because they had no desire to move away from their families and the familiar social environment of the Island to a boarding school situation that was geographically distant, culturally different and highly disciplined.

As already noted, Cape Barren children who travelled to the mainland for schooling experienced a "culture shock", but generally

progressed well. One eleven year old lad who attended school in Launceston was reported in the local press as having increased his reading age from 8 years 8 months to 11 years in the six months he had been away from the Island. This was a remarkable achievement, since his IQ, as stated in the newspaper article, was supposed to have been only 80. Other children from the Island showed similar progress in their schooling.<sup>30</sup>

Not all families availed themselves of the Education Department bursary, however, and many parents chose not to send their children away to school. Other families moved to the mainland so that their children could attend school without having to board away from home. Since the early 1970s, Island secondary schoolchildren have usually boarded on the mainland, and their families have been assisted in this by Commonwealth Aboriginal secondary allowances. In 1983, some Aboriginal relatives of Cape Barren Island schoolchildren indicated to the researcher that they strongly favoured the introduction of secondary schooling on the Island, so that the children would not have to be sent away from home at the age of twelve.<sup>31</sup> However, in 1983, the Principal endorsed the policy of not providing secondary schooling on the Island, for he felt that a mainland high school education would extend the children's experiences and social skills and make them more employable once they left school. There are presently no plans to extend secondary schooling to Cape Barren Island, for the major factor influencing the Education Department on this matter at present is the very high cost of establishing a secondary school for less than half a dozen students.<sup>32</sup> The text of the Cape Barren Island School policy (1983-1985) comprises appendix B.

#### 7.4 Aboriginal Education Policy (1979-1987)

In 1971, the Director-General of Education, A.V. Gough, publicly declared that there were no Aborigines in Tasmanian schools.<sup>33</sup> Eight years later, Tasmania became one of the last Australian States to set up an Aboriginal education consultative group, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee (TAECC). Four years later, in 1983, policy in Aboriginal education was to develop into one of the most controversial and divisive educational issues in the State. The TAECC worked to twelve very broad terms of reference, which included advising the State Ministers for Education, Social Welfare, and Employment and Youth Affairs and the officers of their departments, as well as a variety of other Government and non-government bodies, and was to represent the views of Tasmanian Aboriginal people on all matters concerning the education and training of Aborigines. The TAECC was, additionally, to advise on and monitor the content of materials used in Tasmanian schools, and to undertake, promote, and supervise research programs related to Aboriginal education. The full text of these references is set out in appendix C.

The year 1979 marked not only the setting up of the State's first Aboriginal education consultative group, but the publishing of the first research report into Aboriginal Education, commissioned by the Tasmanian Education Department.<sup>34</sup> The main issues identified by Kerry Randriamahefa's report were the reluctance of most Tasmanian teachers to acknowledge that they were teaching Aboriginal children (as opposed to "part-Aboriginals", "half-castes", "quarter-castes", "islanders", or Aboriginal descendants), and that information about Aborigines was

invariably taught in the context of "pre-history", without reference to the existence of a contemporary Aboriginal community.

Some of the major recommendations of the Randriamahefa report became a basis for the development of certain Aboriginal education programs throughout the state. Randriamahefa recommended that there be a co-ordinated system of policy development in Aboriginal education, that the Department develop resource materials on contemporary and traditional lifestyles of Aboriginal peoples, that existing school texts be revised to delete notions of European superiority, and to take cognisance of the Commonwealth definition of an Aborigine. On the issue of staffing, Randriamahefa recommended that three Aboriginal liaison officers be appointed in three state regions to promote a flow of information between schools, Aboriginal pupils and their families and to provide support services where required, that teachers be exposed to in-service and pre-service training to equip them to teach Aboriginal studies and to understand the educational needs of Aboriginal pupils, and that Aboriginal teachers be redeployed so that they are directly concerned with Aboriginal education. The recommendations of the Randriamahefa report can be seen as reflecting the national policy of educational self-determination for Aborigines, in that they accord with NAEC ideals of increased Aboriginal consultation, participation and responsibility in education (see appendix A). Many of the infrastructures which presently exist in Tasmanian Aboriginal education are implementations of the Randriamahefa report, including the appointment of three Aboriginal liaison officers, and a co-ordinator for Aboriginal education. The Co-ordinator for Aboriginal education, however, presently has no responsibility for the supervision of

field-workers in Aboriginal education, as envisaged in Randriamahefa's report.

In June 1983, Tasmanian Aboriginal education policy abruptly changed its course, when the TAECC was dismissed by the Minister for Education, the Hon. Max Bingham who claimed that:

The Government will not tolerate a situation where political activists attempt to dictate education policy which is contrary to government policy, racial harmony and the wishes of a specific group of Tasmanians.<sup>35</sup>

The Minister also vetoed the publication of a draft booklet produced by the Education Department's Curriculum Centre in consultation with the TAECC. Bingham ordered that the draft booklet, entitled *The Forgotten People*, should be rewritten to delete elements of "racism and politicisation". In response to Mr Bingham, the chairperson of the TAECC protested that no adequate reason was ever given for the sacking of the Committee other than the requirement of the Minister that the committee should confine itself to educational matters and not to politics.<sup>36</sup> Following the TAECC's dismissal, the Minister for Education set up a new Aboriginal education consultative group. Most members of the disenfranchised committee refused to stand for re-election, and urged a boycott of elections.<sup>37</sup> The terms of reference formulated for the second committee, the Tasmanian Aboriginal Education Advisory Council (TAEAC), restricted the new committee to the function of an advisory body to the Education Department alone, and limited the council's power to take independent action. The terms of reference of the TAEAC comprise appendix D. The Minister for Education and his staff then formed a policy on Aboriginal education. The policy recognised the

right of individuals to identify as Aborigines, but did not acknowledge that as indigenous Tasmanians, Aborigines should be accorded any special rights not available to other ethnic groups. These principles can be summarised as follows:

1. The recognition of a continuing Aboriginal community in Tasmania with which Aboriginal people may choose to identify.
2. The adoption of the principle of cultural pluralism which encourages cultural diversity while fostering common values and attitudes amongst the whole of society.
3. The adoption of an anti-discrimination policy.
4. Positive action to redress educational disadvantage to Aborigines and other special groups.

The full text of the policy is set out in appendix E. In response to a invitation from the Minister to comment on its guidelines for the TAEAC, and the policy statement on Aboriginal education, the TAECC voiced its censure of the education policy on the grounds that the policy displayed no commitment to the principle of self-determination for Aborigines, that such a policy is based "on a false notion of equality for all regardless of past injustices", that there is no recognition of any special status of Aborigines as indigenous Tasmanians, and that there is no mention of any role for an Aboriginal Consultative Group. Since the paper had already been circulated to schools as a definitive statement of Government policy, it was pointed out that the paper appeared "less than a genuine attempt at consultation".<sup>38</sup>



The school policy on Cape Barren Island between 1983 and 1985 showed a high degree of coincidence with the Aboriginal education policy endorsed by the Tasmanian Government of granting equal treatment to persons regardless of their cultural background. In 1983, Kieron Burgess, Principal of the Island school during that time, considered that ideals in Aboriginal education regarding changes in the school system to foster a strong sense of Aboriginal identity, to be "very sectarian and separatist" and he claimed that "Apartheid policies have no place in free Australian Education." For Burgess, the main aim of Island education should be to foster a family atmosphere between children, irrespective of their racial origins (see appendix B). It is thus concluded that, at the time of research, there was little correspondence between National Aboriginal Education Committee policy of promoting Aboriginal identity, and Cape Barren Island School policy.

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## CHAPTER EIGHT

### Discussion of Research

#### 8.1 The culture/education/racial policy nexus

Notions of white superiority have so coloured the world view of Anglo-Australians that for the most part of two centuries of colonisation, the assumption that the destruction of Aboriginal culture through extermination or assimilation should be the inevitable consequence of contact with a superior culture has been, until recently, rarely challenged by Anglo-Australians. A degree of ethnocentrism is integral to all cultures, and no doubt, the whites have not been alone in valuing the superiority of their own culture, but given the balance of power relations in Australia, the Aboriginal minority, now just over 1% of the population, has borne the main brunt of racist and ethnocentric policies and actions.

The educational experiences provided for Aborigines and Aboriginal descendants in the Furneaux Islands by Anglo-Australian educators have much in common with contemporaneous national trends in Aboriginal education, yet in certain respects, the curriculum used at the Flinders Island Aboriginal Establishment during the 1830s can be regarded as a unique educational experiment by colonial authorities. Like its counterpart, the earlier Aboriginal Institute in New South Wales, the Establishment school had the professed aims of Christianisation and "civilisation" of the inmates. The common early nineteenth century educational method of using monitors to drill junior

scholars in the catechism and alphabet was employed at the Establishment, with the slight variation that the children who had returned from the Orphan School in Hobart were required to teach the adults. Such a practice must certainly have strained the traditional authority structures of the Aboriginal society which were largely determined by seniority, and would most probably have impeded the handing down of Aboriginal culture from the elders to the youth.

As with the Van Diemen's Land Aboriginal, there appears to have been a strong religious thrust to the educational experiences devised by the community leaders who emerged in the nineteenth century as teachers amongst the Bass Strait sealing community. It should be noted, however, that at the time the Bible was considered an integral part of classroom experience throughout the colony. Nevertheless, whilst teachers from private denominational schools at the time interpreted Biblical tracts to the scholars according to the tenets of their particular religion, from 1839 onwards, State school teachers were prohibited from commenting on Scripture, lest it offend the religious sensibilities of the parents. Yet the strong religious bias to the curriculum in Furneaux Island schools continued with the introduction of State education to the Straits in the latter nineteenth century, for the school was jointly sponsored by the Anglican Church and the Tasmanian Government. The missionary tradition lasted until 1905, with the teachers regularly taking weeks off school duties to attend to missionary activities, and ecclesiastical visitors acting as inspectors of the school. There appears to be no other reason to account for such collusion between the Tasmanian Government and the Church of England over the management of the school than the fact that, by simple virtue of their Aboriginal

heritage, Tasmanian Aboriginal descendants were perceived by the authorities to be in need of missionary endeavour.

In most respects other than the teaching of religion the Cape Barren Island schoolteachers used the standard curricula devised by the Board of Education, and later the Education Department. A feature of Cape Barren Island education, however, has been its elementary nature, for to this day there are no opportunities for secondary education on the Island, other than External Studies correspondence classes.

Many schoolteachers encountered a similar pattern of pupil response to their teaching activities: initial enthusiasm for school and high standards of performance waned and truancy was a common feature of school attendance. This relatively low attendances can be accounted for in part by illnesses that were often rife on the settlement, and by the fact that the families required the children to assist them during the months of the birding season. However, the phenomenon may also be interpreted in terms of a progressive alienation from an education system that was primarily designed for British schoolchildren and transported, with few amendments, to Australia. Whilst educationists in the late nineteenth century recognised that the vocabulary and concepts of set text books were removed from the experience of Anglo-Australian children, such texts must have been even more foreign to the realities of life in a small, isolated, impoverished, and racially-mixed community such as Cape Barren Island. The children's alienation from the curriculum appears to have been paralleled by the parent's disaffection with the schooling for which their forebears had lobbied the Tasmanian Government. When the

behaviour of schoolteachers did not reconcile with their own notions of acceptable behaviour, parents withdrew their children from the school as a gesture of protest to the authorities.

After the expiration of segregation legislation in 1950, the Cape Barren Island school curriculum was amended to accord with prevailing notions in Aboriginal education elsewhere in Australia. School dinners were introduced to improve the nutrition and health of the children, and forms of vocational training were proposed as a means of equipping the Cape Barren Island youth for employment on the Tasmanian mainland. Various types of compensatory education, a feature of the latter assimilationist era in Aboriginal education, were also introduced at the Primary school, and some secondary aged students were awarded scholarships to study at boarding schools on the Tasmanian mainland. Whereas in the 1960s, the boarding of secondary school children on the mainland was a deliberate assimilationist objective, in accordance with the present intellectual shift to integrationist policy, the main impediment to secondary schooling on the Island now appears to be cost. Enrolments at the Primary school are not considered large enough to support the appointment of one or more secondary teachers.

Individual secondary-aged students from Cape Barren Island now receive the financial benefits of Commonwealth Aboriginal education awards to assist their families to send them away to school. The Primary school on Cape Barren Island, clearly benefited from an injection of Commonwealth funds for Aboriginal education in terms of the variety of teaching aids available, the 1983-85 Cape Barren Island School policy rejected the principles of educational self-determination



for Aborigines as enunciated by the National Aboriginal Education Committee. In 1985 the Principal believed that such racially divisive proposals should have no place in a school curriculum.

The study has demonstrated that Tasmania has either closely followed, or in fact, foreshadowed race-relations policies and practices towards Aborigines throughout Australia. The initial Aboriginal policy of the Van Diemen's Land Colony was essentially similar to instructions given to colonial Governments by British administrators: Aborigines were to be treated with friendliness and respect, and protected from acts of violence; they were also to be persuaded to adopt the religion and the lifestyles of the lower classes of colonists. Yet the grim, cruel realities of Tasmanian race-relations were countless unexpiated murders, rapes, tortures, and deaths due to introduced disease, as well as the dispossession of Aborigines from the land, the depletion of their food supplies, and the desecration of their sacred sites. Forced into retaliation, the blacks adopted threatening but ill-fated guerilla tactics to halt the onslaught of "civilisation". The near extermination of the Tasmanian tribes was to be a feature of Australian colonialism, for innumerable clans and tribes throughout Australia encountered a similar fate.

The centralisation policy adopted in Van Diemen's Land was also to be favoured by other State Governments and the Federal Government in the latter nineteenth and for much of the twentieth century. In Van Diemen's Land, Aborigines were rounded up and exiled to an island in Bass Strait, where they were condemned to live, under Government aegis in an artificial institution, and coerced into attending religious services and school classes. The segregation policy adopted by the

Tasmanian Government towards Cape Barren Island also reflected many elements in the body of legislation enacted by State Parliaments and the Federal Government elsewhere in Australia. Like their counterparts on the Australian mainland, both "of the full blood", and "half-caste", the "half-castes" of Tasmania were subjected to bans on alcohol and had their freedom of movement curtailed. They had their behaviour scrutinised by the authorities and strangers were prohibited from entering the Reserve without a permit. The "half-castes" were granted a degree of indemnity; whites were discouraged from marrying "half-castes", and "half-castes" discouraged from adopting white children. Additionally, the 1912 Reserve Act contained the controversial proposal that a government officer be appointed to oversee the management of the Reserve, and overseers were appointed by the Lands Department in the 1930s and 1940s.

Tasmania's assimilation policy also aligned with nationwide trends. As part of this policy, the Cape Barren Islanders were encouraged, if not coerced to migrate to the Tasmanian mainland. There, ex-Cape Barren residents found that some houses offered to them by the Government were sub-standard. Many Islanders also experienced difficulties in gaining employment on racial grounds. A small proportion of the Cape Barren Island population defended their right to remain on the Island, and there presently remains a fluctuating population of around 80.

By the mid 1970s, Government pressure to leave the Island eased and some assistance was rendered to the Islanders from Federal Government sources. The Tasmanian Government had no apparent qualms in

accepting moneys from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs despite the fact that at that time the Tasmanian Government still openly avowed that there were no Aborigines in the State. During the 1970s, housing facilities on the Island were upgraded, Aboriginal education funds directed towards the school, and employment creation projects contributed to making life on the Island more viable. This situation parallels the national integration policy of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Since 1976, Tasmanian Government policy may be referred to as integrationist, in the sense that Tasmanian Aborigines are now usually (though not always) recognised as Aborigines, and there is no longer any overt pressure to assimilate, although the State Government refused to grant them special rights including land rights over other Tasmanians.

The historical research outlined in Part Two to Six has relied, for the most part, on the perspectives of Anglo-Australian observers. Few of these observers showed any sympathy for the community, or tried to understand the nature of the community's grievances with the authorities. Such observers usually commended the activities of the schoolteachers who were not uncommonly perceived as "uncrowned King of the Reserve" and the "supreme authority" on the Reserve. The head teachers, as the only permanent, male, white residents on the Reserve, were invested with a multiplicity of official duties such as postmaster, special constable, Bailiff of Crown Lands, medical officer, pastor, coroner, weather observer, and, unofficially, advisor to the Government on community matters. Such positions could, no doubt, have been filled by members of the community, but there appears to have been a conscious move on the part of the Tasmanian Government to accord as little status as possible to the local residents. After the racially oppressive Cape

Barren Island Reserve Act (1912) had been ratified by Tasmanian Parliament, there seems to have been a perceived need by the authorities to maintain the status quo in white and black power relations, by only appointing whites to authoritative positions.

The strain of performing all the abovementioned official tasks meant that teachers were on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Such duties, combined with the onerous tasks of teaching and school management, were heightened by other tensions brought on by physical and cultural isolation. All this took its toll on the teachers and their families and many teachers, both male and female, collapsed through illness and nervous tension. Many of the wives of teachers devoted a great deal of time to teaching, with little financial remuneration and less official recognition for their efforts, and the educational records almost invariably pertain to the actions of their husbands.

Teachers sent to Cape Barren Island received no training to equip them for what they would find there. It appears that most of them saw themselves as a civilising influence and as such were not prepared to try to understand the values, traditions, and the historical perspective of the community, nor the foundations of their conflicts with Tasmanian authorities. As Special Constable, and in other capacities, the Principal's brief extended beyond the children to the supervision of the adult community, a state of affairs which appears to have been resented by the community which struggled for autonomy and self-management. Some of the more perceptive teachers saw the need to provide the community with a stronger economic base than the seasonal employment of muttonbirding and welfare dependence for the remainder of

the year, but most attempts by teachers to initiate industries on the Island failed, due to lack of Government support for such initiatives. Teacher/community relations on Cape Barren Island have undergone marked fluctuations since the introduction of State schooling last century. Whilst some teachers were clearly ill-chosen, and precipitated strife with the community when their attitudes and actions were not acceptable to the community, other teachers contributed a great deal of talent, energy and hard work to the Island, and appear to have been rewarded by achieving the cooperation of the adults in educational matters.

From time to time, Cape Barren Island teachers actively collaborated with the various race-relations policies the Government adopted towards the community. One of the tacit tasks of the schoolteachers of the nineteenth centuries was to centralise the people on Cape Barren Island in order to provide educational facilities for the children, and pastoral supervision for the adults. Their task was to convert these already professed Christians inside and outside the classrooms, and to give them skills of literacy and numeracy which they had for generations striven to impart to their children.

With regard to the segregation policy, the teachers, as part-time policemen, tried to ensure that the regulations of the Reserve were observed. They enforced a ban on alcohol, discouraged strangers from entering the Reserve, called in truant officers, and frequently advised the Government on the affairs of the community. During the Government's assimilation drive, certain teachers made political statements to the press, regarding the desirability of evicting the community from Cape Barren Island, or adjusted the curricula in

accordance with political considerations about the Islanders' need to prepare for assimilation.

In contrast to the teachers, who were in the enviable position of receiving a secure, comfortable Government salary, the community suffered from poverty and unemployment for more than nine months of the year. Amidst such depressed physical surroundings, however, there appears to have been a strong intellectual tradition that Tasmanian Aboriginal Descendants, as survivors of the original Tasmanian race, were owed significant recompense for the dispossession of their ancestors, and the violent crimes against them. Such notions appear to have been well ahead of their time in terms of the land rights claims of modern Aboriginal activists. This intellectual tradition was backed up by a history of intense political agitation - as early as the mid-nineteenth century, the "half-castes" had, without the benefit of official schooling, learned to use the political system and the Anglican Church to lobby for education and for the reservation of birding islands. In calling for amendments to existing Cape Barren Island Reserve legislation, and for changes in educational provisions, the community displayed a degree of political astuteness that was not acknowledged by Government or Church Officials, who tended to view them as primitive heathens or recalcitrant children, perceptions which appear to have been determined by prevailing ideas about Aborigines generally.

Despite Tasmania's high degree of concurrence with nationwide trends in race-relations policy the context of race-relations policy in Tasmania has long been obfuscated by the widespread acceptance of the belief that Truganini's death in 1876 marked the extinction of the

Tasmanian Aboriginal race. Such a belief appears to have an ideological basis for it represents a restricted interpretation of the definition of an "Aboriginal" and is couched in a misleading form. It has been to the material advantage of white Tasmanians not to recognise the Aboriginality of Aboriginal descendants, for they could thereafter reap the economic benefits of the Tasmanian landscape, and dismiss any claims for landrights and other forms of compensation by Aboriginal descendants. Furthermore, the notion that Aboriginal descendants are not Aborigines can be regarded as ideologically-based, because, in the ethnocentric world-view of white Australians, Tasmanian Aborigines were thought to be positioned even lower on the evolutionary scale than Australian Aboriginals, and possibly on a lower plane than any other human culture that had existed for thousands of years. The "extinction" notion can be considered as functional to Anglo-Australian society because it identified Tasmania as the State with the most reprehensible record of race-relations for exterminating its entire Aboriginal population. Tasmania could thus be made a scape-goat for the guilt of Aboriginal bloodshed elsewhere in Australia. In the minds of certain Anglo-Tasmanians, there may even have been a certain amount of sinister, chauvinistic pride in the belief that the extinction of an Aboriginal race, thought to have been dictated by evolutionary theory, should have been fulfilled on Tasmanian soil and that Tasmania should have been the first of the Australian States to have found a solution to its "Aboriginal problem". Finally, yet another motivation behind the acceptance of the "Last Tasmanian" belief, might be dramatic hyperbole. The documentary film-makers, Haydon and Jones for instance, seem to have been influenced by such a consideration, when they refused to

acknowledge the continuance of Tasmanian Aboriginal society into the twentieth century in their documentary film, The Last Tasmanian. To acknowledge the existence of survivors to the genocide would possibly have diminished the dramatic impact of their visual catalogue of the horrors of the Van Diemen's Land race relations.

It is concluded that Tasmania should not be considered, as Turnbull has maintained, to have provided the "ultimate solution" to the tensions of colonial race-relations, through a process of extermination of its indigenous peoples, nor should it be considered the "picture of Dorian Gray" in the nation's attic.<sup>1</sup> Although the issue is a complex one, it is the present researcher's view that Tasmania is not particularly unique in its patterns of race-relations policies or educational practices towards Aborigines. What is peculiar about Tasmania is the force of the ideological belief in the extinction of the Tasmanian Aborigines. This belief has obscured the fact that for over a century, the Tasmanian Government has applied Aboriginal policies to a people who were not officially considered to be Aboriginal.

From an educational standpoint, the "no Aborigines" policy and the hypocrisy associated with the administration of Aboriginal policies, has had certain consequences for the Cape Barren Islanders and other Aboriginal descendants. It was not until the late 1970s that the Education Department recognised the existence of Aboriginal children in Tasmanian schools - prior to that time, the children at the school were perceived in terms of special or disadvantaged students. The school curriculum has, on the whole, done little to reinforce the identity of the Cape Barren Island pupils as Aborigines, and it appears that few



teachers have endeavoured to give the children a sense of historical perspective concerning the evolution of the Cape Barren Island community. Instead, the perspectives offered the children have been generally those of white, middle-class Anglo-Australia.

The problem of lack of coincidence between the culture and expectation of teachers and the culture of the community is, of course, not peculiar to Cape Barren Island, but occurs whenever, for example, teachers are sent to isolated rural communities, mining or Hydro Electric Commission towns, working class suburbs, and migrant areas. Much of the research presented here, concerning teacher and community conflicts seems to indicate that it makes little pedagogic sense to disregard, demean, or ignore the values, aspirations, identity and experiences of such a community. Certainly, today's Aboriginal educationists, and the NAEC are calling for more Aboriginal participation, involvement and responsibility in educational matters, in order to reinforce the identity of Aboriginal students and bolster their educational achievements.

It has been argued that the present policy of self-determination in Aboriginal education may not be ideal in its practical manifestations, but it seems to be a better alternative to former race-relations policies which largely excluded Aborigines from policy-making and administration of Aboriginal affairs. This is also the view of Clair Anderson, Tasmanian Coordinator for Aboriginal education, who maintains that Aborigines cannot afford to opt out of policies of Aboriginal self-determination or self-management, or indeed any opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in educational matters, since:

Change can only occur by working together towards formulating a policy which will work. However, nobody knows what will work until numerous possibilities have been tried. Previously governments have imposed a variety of inadequate policies upon Aboriginal people. However with more Aboriginal involvement perhaps we can look forward to more adequate policies in the future.<sup>2</sup>

NOTES

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## APPENDIX A

### National Aboriginal Education Committee Aims and Objectives, 1977

(The NAEC has since revised its policy statement:

Philosophy, aims and policy guidelines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, 1985, NAEC, Australian Government Printing Service, Canberra.

The 1977 Statement is included here, because it was the basis for comments by the 1983 Cape Barren Island School principal, which comprise Appendix B).

#### AIMS:

1. To reinforce and recognise that there exists a common feeling of Aboriginality among all the indigenous people of Australia which includes the traditional and non-traditional people of the mainland, the Torres Strait Islands and Tasmania.
2. Education for Aboriginal people must be a process which builds on what Aboriginal people are by recognising and developing their natural potential and not by destroying their cultural heritage. The National Committee believes that some changes to the school system would enable a strong Aboriginal identity to be a positive education factor.
3. Aboriginal studies must become an integral part of the education of every Australian. It must be taught with a high degree of respect and understanding to develop an accurate knowledge of Australian history, Aboriginal cultures and lifestyles.
4. Education for all Australians must be a means of promoting cross-cultural understanding through an intensive community education program. It should aim to develop understanding, tolerance and respect for the differing cultural

viewpoints held by the peoples of Australia. In doing so the uniqueness of the indigenous peoples must not become a lost entity within a multicultural Australia

5. The educational services offered to both traditional and non-traditional people must aim for and be capable of developing and strengthening the Aborigines' knowledge of, and pride in their cultural heritage as well as obtaining the academic and technological skills required of Aboriginal Australians today. To ensure effective learning the latter must be acquired in harmony with the Aborigines' own cultural values, identity and choice of lifestyle, whether residing in an urban, rural, traditional community or homeland centre.

6. Aboriginal people must be given responsibility for the implementation of policies, funding and the administration of programs in Aboriginal education.

7. In order to ensure the effectiveness of education services for Aboriginal people, Aborigines should play the major part in the delivery of those services. This requires an immediate and substantial change in policy and the implementation of new programs to train and employ Aborigines in the various fields of education.

8. Aboriginal education research must be of direct benefit to Aborigines.

The means of achieving these aims is through the following objectives:-

#### OBJECTIVES :

1. To work in close consultation with the National Aboriginal Conference, State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups as well as Aboriginal communities and organizations.

2. The urgent setting up of a National Inquiry into all aspects of Aboriginal education under the auspices of the N.A.E.C. in consultation with State Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

3. To work towards the establishment of a National Aboriginal Education Commission. The proposed Commission should be a Statutory Body established by an Act of Parliament. This would place the funding, administration and responsibility for Aboriginal education under the direction of Aboriginal people.
4. The establishment of an Aboriginal Education Resource and Curriculum Development Unit which would produce materials for Aborigines and non-Aborigines. The Unit, through the N.A.E.C., would develop links and working relationships with State and regional Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups and the existing Curriculum Development Centre.
5. The immediate implementation of steps to increase, substantially and quickly, Aboriginal involvement, influence and participation in educational programs at all levels offered to Aboriginal people throughout Australia. This will require the provision of large scale training programs, manpower planning, understudy and planned academic study. Preparation of Aborigines for participation in these ways should include Aboriginal education philosophy and community-influenced curriculum content.
6. The implementation throughout Australia of community education schemes based on parental involvement at the local level. Initially these could be associated with the establishment of community learning centres within Aboriginal community groups.
7. The establishment of a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander College of Advanced Education with campuses located in several different areas of Australia. The NATSCAE could offer a wide variety of courses at all levels.
8. The establishment of appropriate teacher education courses apart from the present schemes so that Aboriginal teachers will receive accredited teaching qualifications and training in Aboriginal philosophy, teaching methods and curriculum development.
9. Any research discussions or activities in the area of Aboriginal education must be conducted in a manner which is consistent with our policy of Aboriginal



9. Any research discussions or activities in the area of Aboriginal education must be conducted in a manner which is consistent with our policy of Aboriginal decision-making in the provision of educational services to Aboriginal people. Most research fails to produce results of immediate advantage to Aborigines, and in some instance has further disadvantaged Aboriginal people.

The N.A.E.C. believes that research in Aboriginal education is of such importance that any proposals should take cognisance of the following statements:-

(a) All research projects should have the prior and final approval of the local community and/or State or National Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups.

(b) Emphasis should be placed on action oriented research and on research relevant to the needs of Aboriginal people as defined by Aboriginal people.

(c) Committees approving research projects should have majority Aboriginal membership.

(d) The committee overseeing research projects should have majority Aboriginal membership.

(e) Research projects should make maximum use of those Aborigines with research skills and where possible the principal researcher should be an Aborigine.

(f) A research skills training program should be developed to enable Aboriginal people to obtain these skills so that a pool of qualified Aboriginal researchers will be readily available.

(g) Any research project should involve the local Aboriginal people and other Aboriginal resource personnel as much as possible.

(h) Any research project should provide the involved research team with in-service training on research skills and techniques. This should be an essential part of the project.

(i) Results of research undertaken should be made available in a form understandable by those people who were the subjects of the research.

10. The N.A.E.C. considers that evaluation should be an integral part of all Aboriginal education. The evaluation processes should always involve a majority of Aboriginal people so that a reliable expression of Aboriginal viewpoints on such programs is available. Future programs should be planned around the results of these evaluations.

## APPENDIX B

### CAPE BARREN ISLAND SCHOOL POLICY, MAY 1983

#### Personal views of NAEC Aims and Objectives

Note: These views are my own at this time and not in any way a statement of Departmental policy.

With reference to the NAEC aims and objectives, I see them as very sectarian and separatist, e.g., changes in the school system to enable a strong Aboriginal identity to be a positive education factor.

The objectives to an even greater extent open Aboriginals to charges of separatism by making their programmes elitist and discriminatory, e.g. researchers, curriculum planners etc to be Aboriginals only. Apartheid policies have no place in free Australian Education.

Every school, through its pupils, teachers, environment and community, is different. But Cape Barren is special, certainly in Tasmania and probably in all Australia there is no school which approaches the uniqueness of this situation.

The resident population is largely of Aboriginal descent with only about 20% European. Less than half of the school number are of Aboriginal descent this year with Island statistics at present indicating a drop to only a third in the coming year if the population is static (which is unusual).

The school operates perhaps like any small school with a family-like atmosphere, there is no hint of separatism or prejudice between the children. The children are taught those skills which will fit them, not only for those skills furthered in high school but those that will continue to develop when the children reach adult-hood.

I see secondary schooling in Launceston as being the most beneficial in terms of future employment for these children although a large proportion have in the past attended the Flinders Is. District School which provides an equal standard of education to the mainland but without the further opportunities of the latter.

Additionally, secondary schooling on Cape Barren would not be in the best interest of the pupils despite local, short-term advantages e.g. no air-travel to and from school. The benefits of Secondary schooling 'away' are twofold,

firstly the greater range of subjects and teaching expertise available and secondly the fact that the children would be more socially exposed to the wider employment opportunities.

In conclusion it must be stated that my first love is for the children at present in my charge, it is my obligation to not only foster the best possible education in this place, but to provide a caring environment in and out of school hours and to ensure that the children's opportunities for the future are as good as possible.

Principal,  
Cape Barren Island Special School.

## APPENDIX C

### TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

#### Terms of Reference

- (a) To provide the Tasmanian Minister for Education, the Minister for Social Welfare and the Minister for Employment and Youth Affairs and their officers with a reliable expression of informed views on the education and training needs of Aboriginal people.
- (b) To advise and consult with education, training and welfare authorities regarding the effectiveness of current programs and projects involving Aborigines. Such programs should ensure that Aborigines have access to appropriate education.
- (c) To consult with and advise other state, commonwealth and non-government authorities involved in educational and training programs for Aborigines; the National Aboriginal Education Committee; the Council for Aboriginal Development and the National Aboriginal Conference; other government and non-government agencies involved in Aboriginal affairs; the Aboriginal organisations and communities.
- (d) To advise and monitor the content and reference material used in Tasmanian schools in relation to the culture and past and present history of the Aboriginal people in Tasmania.
- (e) To be directly involved in the planning and implementation of new policies and programs in the education and training of Tasmanian Aborigines.
- (f) To undertake or promote research studies and projects deemed relevant by the Aboriginal people.
- (g) To undertake that all research studies and projects relevant to Aboriginal education are not carried out without the prior approval of, and consultation with local community groups of this Committee.

- (h) To undertake or promote programs which will increase the knowledge and understanding that non-Aborigines have of Aborigines.
- (i) To provide for the Aboriginal people of Tasmania, resources and information relevant to Aboriginal education and training.
- (j) To produce reports on Aboriginal education and training.
- (k) To undertake any other activities which will help meet the needs and aspirations of the Aboriginal people of Tasmania.
- (l) This Committee should be representative of the Aboriginal people in Tasmania.

APPENDIX D

## TASMANIAN ABORIGINAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

## TERMS OF REFERENCE, 1983

The Council will have the following functions:

- (1) To provide the Tasmanian Minister for Education with information about the views of the Aboriginal community on the educational needs of the Aboriginal people.
- (2) To provide the Minister with advice on the development of policies and programs for the education of Tasmanian Aborigines.
- (3) To advise and consult with educational authorities about the effectiveness of current programs for the education of Tasmanian Aborigines.
- (4) To advise the Director-General of Education on the resource material which Tasmanian schools use about the history, culture and present situation of Aboriginal people in Tasmania.
- (5) On behalf of the Minister and the Director-General of Education, to advise the local Aboriginal community groups on all research studies and projects to be carried out relevant to Aboriginal education and to ensure that these projects are carried out in consultation with Aboriginal community groups.
- (6) To provide the Director-General with recommendations about programs to increase the knowledge and understanding that non-Aborigines have of Aborigines. Where required, to promote programs approved by the Director-General.
- (7) To disseminate to the Aboriginal people of Tasmania details of available resources and information relevant to Aboriginal education.

## APPENDIX E

Government of Tasmania

June 1983

### POLICY ON ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

#### Introduction

This paper outlines the basic principles on which the Government's policy on Aboriginal education will be based. These are :

- (1)The existence of a continuing Aboriginal community in Tasmania, with which people of Aboriginal descent may choose to identify.
- (2)The adoption of a policy of cultural pluralism which both values the contribution to the community of racial and ethnic subcultures and fosters values and attitudes which are held in common regardless of membership of a particular subculture.
- (3)The adoption of the firm policy of eliminating descrimination on the basis of racial or ethnic origin, religion or sex.
- (4)The implementation of action to redress disadvantages which Aborigines may be experiencing in education and to encourage the recognition of the Aboriginal community by all Tasmanians.

#### Principle 1 : Recognition

The Government's policy on Aboriginal education begins with a recognition of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community and with an acceptance of the right of people of Aboriginal descent to identify themselves with this community. The 1975 Aboriginal affairs policy of the Liberal and National Party expresses the view of the Government well: "We recognise the fundamental right of Aborigines to retain their racial identity and traditional lifestyle or where desired to adopt partially or wholly a European lifestyle."



## Principle 2 : Pluralism

The prevailing policies of both Commonwealth and State governments recognizes the cultural diversity of Australian society. In encouraging the persistence of racial and ethnic subcultures governments accept and value differences in Australian culture. They accept the right of an individual to identify with a particular subgroup and argue that there is a nexus between cultural heritage, identity and self-esteem. They accept that individually citizens must be able to determine their own participation within the various cultures which go to make up Australian society: it is not for any government agency or community organisation to decide this for them. The Tasmanian government also accepts this policy.

However, the Government also wishes to emphasise the things which Tasmanian citizens have in common and to foster a recognition that we are all members of one society. What is not often stressed is that a policy of cultural pluralism needs to operate within a broader framework of things that are common to Australian society: the acceptance of some common ethical and moral values and the legitimacy of the social, legal and political framework. In the view of the Government, cultural diversity needs to be located within such a framework or our society will disintegrate. This policy is thus based on the notion of dual cultural identity: that an individual is capable of operating within two cultural networks at the same time, of selecting from and incorporating from more than one component in developing his or her individual identity.

## Principle 3 : Anti-discrimination

The Government wishes to eliminate any discrimination against Aborigines and to promote cross-cultural understanding and co-operation. In this country there is legislation which supports such a policy but, in addition, there is a need to promote understanding and co-operation through a continuing process of community education for all age groups. The aim is to bring about a higher level of mutual tolerance and trust than has so far marked our history.

#### Principle 4 : Action on Aboriginal Education

The Government recognises the need for positive and educational measures which will :

- (1) enhance the chances in life of individual Aboriginal children (hence measures to enhance educational achievement and participation), on the basis that membership of a particular subculture should not be associated with reduced opportunities;
- (2) support the Aboriginal community, by respecting its cultural forms and patterns of organisation, and by encouraging its recognition by all Tasmania citizens (for example, through the development of curriculum materials for all children about Aboriginal culture).

In taking initiatives to achieve these ends the Government will seek the support of the general Aboriginal community and in planning the Government will consult with members of the Aboriginal community. However, decisions about implementation will be made by the Education Department and, where appropriate, the Minister for Education.

#### Conclusion

The intention of the Government is to use the principles in this paper as a basis for planning a definite course of action to be taken in Aboriginal education. These will be considered in the context of the Government's policy for all educationally disadvantaged children in Tasmania.